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DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

JAN. 1, 1924 NO. 147

Feature Detective Story

THE BARRINGTON ARMS CASE

by

Jack Bechdolt

Special Added Feature

A NEW SERIAL—

Decoy Ducks

by

GEORGE BRONSON HOWARD

ARTHUR G. HADLEY

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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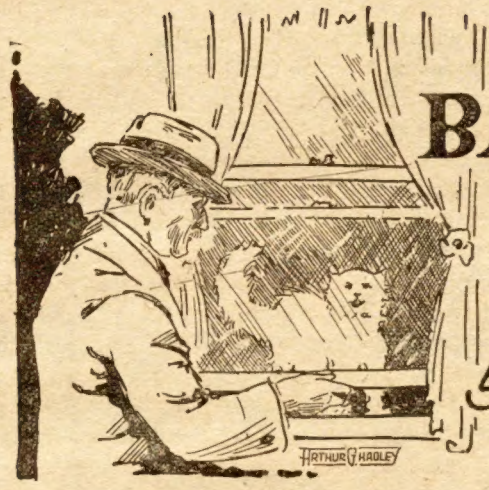
THE EDITOR



THE BARRINGTON ARMS CASE

by Jack Bechdolt

CHAPTER ONE

A MAN IN A HURRY

THE Barrington Arms apartments stands facing Central Park.

The handsome sixteen-story building towers head and shoulders above the neighboring residences of old-style brick, its big studio windows looking down upon the street.

Since its erection seven years ago the Barrington Arms has been let exclusively to men. It is a bachelor hotel and its rentals range from eight thousand a year upwards—mostly upwards.

On a raw spring night a young man named Gerald Leighton stepped cautiously into the public corridor of the top floor of the Barrington Arms. The door which he pulled to behind him with stealthy quiet bore the card of Rudolph Bleecker.

As he came into the corridor Leighton, who was a young man, athletic of figure, good-looking blonde, pulled his soft cap lower over his eyes and turned the collar of his light top coat about his face. This he did with his right hand, while his left still held the door to Bleecker's apartment slightly ajar as if he would retreat within at the slightest provocation.

The public corridor was small. Three doors faced on it at varying angles, the door to Bleecker's apartment and doors of two other apartments. The fourth side of the corridor contained the folding doors of the apartment-house elevator and a small emergency stair to the street.

The hour was 8.45, a quiet time. There was nobody but Leighton in the corridor, and no sign of life from behind the closed doors or hint that anybody might soon emerge into the hall.

Reassured by this, the young man closed the door behind him and heard its automatic latch click.

He walked hurriedly to the elevator and pressed the call button. Presently he pressed the button again and again, and held his finger upon it a considerable time. Leighton put his ear against the crack in the sliding door, listening for the sigh of a rising elevator. He fidgeted in this way for perhaps five minutes and began to walk the corridor, stopping every few seconds to ring the elevator bell again.

Leighton's good-humored, handsome face, what little of it one might see between the

cap brim and the upturned collar, showed signs of extreme impatience and apprehension. Several times he hesitated before the small open stair which led downward and finally, with a shrug of the shoulders, entered this means of exit.

The emergency stair was fairly narrow and descended with many turns, following the course of the elevator shaft toward the ground floor. At each floor the pedestrian crossed a corridor similar to that of the top floor and each time he stopped for a hurried survey of the ground before he ventured out of the walled-in stairway.

The steps seemed interminable and Leighton grew fairly dizzy with their everlasting turnings. By the time he had reached the fifth floor he tired of his progress and turned again to the elevator shaft, repeating his ringing and waiting for the car.

The wait only added to his growing impatience. He plunged again into the emergency stairway and began to take the steps two at a jump. In this way he reached the second story of the building. There, as he turned into the stair's next course, he came up sharp against a door of iron grillework. The door was locked.

Gerald Leighton rattled the doorknob and shook the grille. His progress was barred. In order to prevent persons without any business coming in from the street and reaching the apartments above by eluding the hall boy, the apartment-house management had placed this effective barrier across the emergency stair. Gerald Leighton, trying to get out of the place, found himself a prisoner.

He said sharply, explosively: "Well, I'll be damned!"

Leighton's predicament might be amusing, embarrassing or tragic, according to circumstances. Judging by his face, it was all three. The blood receded from his pleasantly tanned cheeks and he caught his under lip between his teeth, breathing hard. A moment later he managed to grin slightly at the futility of all his pains.

A suppressed noise startled him then. It was the unmistakable sigh of the car in the elevator shaft, a soft, faint "wheeesh" of air driven through the cracks of the elevator shaft doors as the moving car acted like a plunger in a giant pump. It proved that the elevator was moving, that the operator had returned to his post.

Leighton hurried to the shaft and pressed the call button, holding it down hard. He could hear an answering trill of a bell in the car itself. The trill grew fainter as he listened and he judged that the car was rising toward the top of the building. He continued to press at intervals for fully a quarter of an hour, making numerous comments on the management and service of the apartment house as he did so. There was no further sign of life in the elevator machinery.

"This certainly will—not—do!" said Leighton seriously. He added thoughtfully: "There's a hall boy downstairs, or some sort of porter—unless perhaps he also runs the elevator. I'll try rousing him."

He returned to the grille door and, pressing against it, whistled shrilly and began to call. There was no response from below, but presently the door of an apartment near him opened cautiously. "What's the matter?"

Leighton turned sharply at the question and his face withdrew itself within the upturned collar. "I'm very sorry I disturbed anybody," the young man explained hurriedly, addressing himself to the crack in the door behind which his questioner lurked. "I think the elevator boy has sleeping sickness—or something wrong with him. I've been trying for nearly an hour to get out of this building. If you know any way to rouse somebody——"

The door he addressed opened wider now, showing a middle-aged man in a dinner coat.

"That elevator service is the limit!" he agreed. "After eight o'clock there's just one boy to run the car and mind the telephone switchboard—and he spends half his time out on the pavement in front of the building, shooting crap with the taxi drivers. It's a disgrace!"

The two men returned to the elevator shaft together and rang for the car again. The man in the dinner coat began to kick

against the sliding door. These tactics were of no more use than Leighton's previous attempts.

"A fine fix we'd be in if this building caught fire—with the elevator out of commission and the door on those stairs locked!" the dinner-coated man grumbled. "Say, I'll try the phone—see if I can't rouse the superintendent. He's supposed to be in his flat in the basement——" He hesitated as he turned toward his own open door, eyeing Leighton sharply. Leighton appeared distinctly uneasy under the scrutiny, drawing away from him.

"Isn't your name Leighton?" the tenant asked suddenly. "You're with the Kent Syndicate people—in Roscoe Kent's office?"

Leighton hesitated noticeably before he answered:

"Yes, I'm Leighton."

"Thought I couldn't forget a face! My name is Kale. Called at Kent's office last month, and I remember telling my business to you."

"I'm Mr. Kent's secretary," Leighton said in confirmation. He went on with an abrupt burst of explanation: "I—I was calling on a friend—an acquaintance, rather—a business call—upstairs—and I have an important engagement uptown. It's for nine o'clock and I'm late now! I'd like to get out of this place if there's any way to manage it."

"I'll put a flea in that superintendent's ear," Kale vowed. "It's a disgrace, Mr. Leighton! I'll bet you we'll have a new hall boy tomorrow or this flat will have a new tenant. Come in while I phone!" He snatched down the instrument as he spoke and rattled the hook. They waited impatiently. "Can you beat this!" Kale burst out. "Nobody on the switchboard! But of course! The boy has taken the car up! Well, I am blessed!"

Leighton and Kale stared at one another. Leighton began to look panicky.

"You've been very kind, Mr. Kale," he said hurriedly, "but we don't seem to be getting anywhere. And I've got to get uptown! I—I wonder—is there a fire escape out of your window?"

"Sure!" Kale agreed hospitably. "You'd have to jump the last six feet—kind of dirty and messy."

"I don't mind that! Let me go down that way. I must be on my way! It's past nine already!"

"Right this way——" Kale began hospitably. He stopped. "Listen! Hold on! There comes the elevator at last!"

He ran toward the elevator shaft. Leighton hesitated, then turned to follow him. Kale's finger was already on the call button.

"By George!" he was growling, "we'll get a little action this time!"

The next moment proved Kale a better prophet than he dreamed.

The car stopped at the floor they stood on. The elevator door slammed open with a bang! A uniformed policeman sprang out of the car with a shout and his hand caught Leighton's shoulder.

"You're the bird we're looking for!" the officer exclaimed.

The astounded Kale turned at the sound of feet drumming on the emergency stair. Out of the stairway came another bluecoat with a bound.

Gerald Leighton found himself between the two—a prisoner. Leighton said nothing. It was Kale who gasped a question.

"Wanted for murder," said the first policeman grimly. "Party on the top floor. You'd better come with us—as a witness."

CHAPTER TWO

A PLAIN CASE

RUDOLPH BLEECKER was dead.

A hurriedly summoned surgeon had settled the fate of the rich, pioneer tenant of the Barrington Arms beyond doubt.

His body had been removed, but its position as it was found by the scared hall boy of the apartment house was carefully noted.

An hour had passed since the surprise and arrest of Gerald Leighton, and evidence in the case was well in hand. The Police Commissioner himself had taken charge of the investigation, for the death of Rudolph

Bleecker was no little thing in police circles. The Commissioner knew things about the suave, white-haired, aristocratic tenant of the Barrington Arms which few others knew. He judged it best to take charge of the investigation in person.

The hall man of the Barrington Arms was the principal witness. He was a much-excited and badly scared young man, but he managed to give the police a circumstantial story.

This man, whose name was Jenks, came on duty at 7 o'clock in the evening. At that time the day hall porter and the young woman who attended the telephone switchboard went home, leaving Jenks to combine both duties in the evening, when calls were fewer.

Jenks had taken Mr. Bleecker to his apartment at about 7.30. Bleecker had dined in the Barrington Arms restaurant on the street floor and he carried a small package wrapped in a napkin—some chicken bones for the big Siamese cat he kept in his apartment.

"The flat was empty when Mr. Bleecker let himself in," Jenks testified.

"How do you know that?" the Commissioner asked.

"Well, you see, Mr. Bleecker had promised me a cigar. You understand, we were kind of friendly on account of the cat. The tenants aren't supposed to keep pets in these apartments, cats or dogs anyhow—though I never heard any complaint about canaries or goldfish. So I and the day boy had a sort of little graft with Mr. Bleecker, looking after the cat when he was called out of town or anything. So when we rode up alone in the car Mr. Bleecher was reminded he had promised me a smoke and he asked me to step into the apartment. I stood in the vestibule while he snapped on lights in the different rooms, and sort of looked around everywhere as if to make sure things were all right. He kept me waiting maybe five minutes while he looked around——"

"As if he wanted to be sure you were near if anybody *was* in the place?" the Commissioner prompted.

"Why, yes! It did look like that!" Jenks agreed. "Because he sort of forgot me a minute. Then he gave me the cigar, and I left. Next time I brought the car up to this floor was about eight. My passenger was this man here." Jenks indicated Gerald Leighton. "I waited at the top floor until I saw Mr. Bleecker open the door and let him in—that's our orders at night. Then I came back to the switchboard downstairs. At just about nine o'clock the telephone board began to buzz, showing somebody upstairs was trying to get a call out, and the elevator bell began to ring. I was wondering which one to answer first, maybe delaying a minute or two——"

At this point the Commissioner interrupted sternly:

"Don't lie to me! You weren't on the job when that call came! You were in the street talking to two taxi drivers."

Jenks grinned sheepishly.

"Yes, sir. I wasn't gone more than five minutes, though, and I kept the main door open to hear if anybody rang. Hearing the bell and the buzzer on the switchboard both going, I ran in and answered the telephone first. I—it was Bleecker's voice, all right——"

"What did he say?"

"He shouted my name, or I thought it was my name. Then he gave a terrible yell for help. Then there wasn't any sound. I kept asking what was wrong, but there wasn't any answer. So I beat it to the corner, and found the two officers."

From this point the narrative was official. The policemen, Carr and Moore, had run to the Barrington Arms at the hall man's alarm, and the three had gone to the sixteenth floor in the elevator. Jenks had used the master key to let them in. They found Rudolph Bleecker's body stretched face down near the telephone. The receiver was off its hook, as he had dropped it.

Rudolph Bleecker had been shot in the back. The pistol, which was equipped with a silencer, lay on the rug beside him. His apartment was empty. The windows were closed. There was no sign of struggle, no disarranged furniture, no marks upon the body to indicate the reason for Bleecker's death or details of his last moments.

It was then Jenks recalled taking Gerald

Leighton to Bleecker's apartment. Leighton had not come down in the elevator, therefore he must be in the building still. Beside the elevator there were two means of egress, a stair to the roof of the building, guarded by a locked door, and the emergency stair to the street, also guarded by a locked door. The windows of the apartment opened on a sheer wall, sixteen stories above the street. A minute's search satisfied the policemen that their man was in the building and their search ended triumphantly in the finding of Gerald Leighton in the very act of persuading the tenant Kale to let him out by a fire escape.

The investigation had reached this pass when the door of Bleecker's apartment was opened to admit a man of middle age, with grizzled, iron-gray hair, deeply lined face and small, shrewd, twinkling eyes. He wore loose, old-fashioned clothing, immaculate white linen and a black string tie. The Commissioner greeted the newcomer with a smile and an apology:

"Detective Markman! Too bad we had to bother you, old man. I guess we've got our case all in hand and we won't need your help this time."

CHAPTER THREE

ROSCOE KENT

FORD MARKMAN, unofficial detective and right-hand adviser to the Commissioner in many cases of unusual importance, shrugged his broad shoulders and smiled philosophically.

"It was no trouble to come," he explained good-naturedly. "But I'm glad to hear you've got your man, and closed your case. That's prompt work—pretty prompt work!"

Markman's eyes turned to Gerald Leighton, who sat between the policemen, Carr and Moore. Leighton's eyes were on the pattern of the rug at his feet. He was white, miserable and silent. Something in the tone of Markman's voice, something warm with friendship for everybody, caused him to glance up for a second. His eyes met the old detective's, and in the momentary glance that passed expressed so much of dumb despair that the detective, hardened as he was by many cases of misery, felt himself moved to pity.

"This is your prisoner?" he asked.

"That's our man. No use asking him to talk, though. He won't speak!"

Confirming this, Gerald Leighton shook his head.

"Send for Mr. Roscoe Kent," he said dully. "I tell you he will prove to you that I am innocent!"

"I have sent for Mr. Kent," the Commissioner explained not unkindly. "If he can explain anything in your favor, I'll be glad to hear it."

"And meantime," Markman suggested, "suppose you gratify my curiosity."

The Commissioner reported the facts as they have already been told. He added confidentially, drawing the detective aside:

"We come to the question of motive. That's the most ticklish point in our case, but I think we'll get that out of Roscoe Kent. This man Rudolph Bleecker has been a thorn in the side of the police force for the past decade. You have heard of him, Markman?"

The old detective shook his head.

"Bleecker," said the Commissioner, "has amassed a considerable fortune by a form of blackmail which has never been proved against him in any court of law, but proved often enough to my own satisfaction and the satisfaction of my predecessors in office. His victims have invariably been large business corporations—never individuals."

"A big business blackmailer!" Markman exclaimed.

"Exactly! My dear fellow, most of our big businesses, as they are constituted today, have skeletons in their closets—sometimes a whole graveyard full of rattling bones. These scandals are not necessarily the result of personal crookedness or moral turpitude, either. They are the result of a violent reform in our Federal laws governing business competition, laws made in the last decade or two. Markman, you recall the Federal 'trust-busting' agitation of a few years ago?"

"Most certainly!"

"And the Nevada Sugar letters which were published in a syndicate of sensational newspapers at the height of that excitement?"

"The letters that proved the Nevada Sugar people had used all sorts of illegal methods to stamp out competition? Indeed I do!"

"Those letters are a good sample of the fine Italian hand of Rudolph Bleecker. They were stolen, in the first place, by a twenty-dollar-a-week clerk from the confidential file of the Sugar Trust. This clerk, we have reason to believe, was hired by Bleecker through some third party. At any rate, they came into Bleecker's hands. Bleecker offered them back to the sugar people for fifty thousand dollars. In that case the sugar interests had the courage and the wisdom to refuse to pay one cent of tribute to the blackmailer and defied him to do his worst. Bleecker was obliged to sell the letters to a newspaper syndicate for a mere ten thousand—and I doubt if the harm their publication actually did amounted to ten cents!

"But the Sugar case is a rare instance of courage—an exception to the general rule. Bleecker has grown fat by ferreting out scandals abhorrent to the guilty consciences of many a big business and accepting money to hold his tongue. I have known this for many years, but I repeat we never could prove it because the witnesses necessary had every reason to avoid publicity of any sort.

"Now what happens tonight? This Leighton, confidential secretary to Roscoe Kent, calls secretly on Bleecker. Obviously he called to buy up some secret Bleecker had to sell—something highly discreditable to the Kent Syndicate, which at the present time is attempting to amalgamate the motor industries of the country and has every reason to avoid unfavorable publicity. Leighton refuses to say a word, but it's plain as the nose on your face that Leighton quarreled with Bleecker about the price to be paid, and the quarrel ended in a killing."

Markman rubbed his nose in a puzzled way.

"Your motive is scarcely strong enough, Commissioner. Why should a paid employee, a confidential secretary, take the secrets of the Kent Syndicate so much to heart as to commit murder?"

"Why, indeed," the Commissioner agreed, "provided he is nothing but a paid employee? But supposing, Markman, that our young man is engaged to marry old Kent's daughter? Supposing, what I have reason to believe, that the secret in question is one which might send Roscoe Kent to Atlanta for five or ten years? Would Gerald Leighton take a chance to spare the girl he is about to marry the shame of seeing her father in a felon's cell—or wouldn't he?"

"If that is true," Markman agreed soberly, "it looks bad for Gerald Leighton—poor young fellow!—unless, of course, Roscoe Kent can clear him."

The two men were startled by an abrupt movement of the prisoner. Gerald Leighton had jumped to his feet. His face was turned eagerly toward the door.

The patrolman on duty in the hall had just admitted a middle-aged man of pompous carriage and rather portly figure. His face was adorned with old-fashioned sideburns and wore a stern, though somewhat alarmed, expression. His protuberant eyes, compressed lips and high color hinted at a chronic bad temper. He was clad in formal evening dress covered by a loose coat and carried a large, gold-headed stick.

"Mr. Kent!" Leighton exclaimed.

While Markman and the Commissioner watched curiously, the prisoner hurried on:

"Mr. Kent, Rudolph Bleecker has been murdered. The police know I visited him, and they have accused me of the crime. Mr. Kent, I asked them to send for you to clear me of this charge. I ask you to tell these officers——"

Kent interrupted sharply.

"Leighton! What have you said?"

"Nothing," Leighton answered.

"Quite true," the Commissioner confirmed. "This man persists in his story that you can explain his business here tonight and prove him innocent. We are waiting for your statement."

"And Leighton has said nothing?"

"Nothing at all, Mr. Kent."

Roscoe Kent seemed to consider this for a moment or two. His eyes gleamed coldly and he raised his head, staring at them all, marvelously cool.

"Very well, gentlemen, you are welcome to my statement. This young man, Gerald Leighton, is my confidential secretary, and has been for five years. He is also, I am sorry to say, engaged to marry my daughter Cynthia—against my wishes. These facts I know quite well, but as to why Gerald Leighton came to this place, or called upon Rudolph Bleecker, or had any business with Bleecker, or in any other way got himself into trouble over Bleecker, I have no idea whatsoever. That is my statement. I know nothing about Leighton's connection with Rudolph Bleecker—and, what's more, I don't want to know."

CHAPTER FOUR

LEIGHTON SPEAKS

ROSCOE KENT'S surprising statement was given in a tone of finality. He eyed each man in the room in turn as he spoke, and in his manner they felt something of the forceful, autocratic personality of the builder of a successful big business.

They were all silent, dumb with surprise.

After a moment Kent added:

"That is all the information I can give you, gentlemen. If you will excuse me now, I have another engagement——"

"Mr. Kent!"

Gerald Leighton leveled a trembling finger at his employer. As the import of Kent's words was fully grasped, Leighton's jaw had momentarily dropped open. His eyes widened vacantly. He seemed incapable of speech at all. Then abruptly the jaw had closed, and Leighton's was a well-formed, decisive jaw. The color returned to his cheeks and his blue eyes blazed.

"I intend to make a statement, Mr. Kent," Leighton said firmly. "Since you refuse to speak—since you refuse to stand by the man who risked everything for you—I shall be forced to defend myself."

Roscoe Kent interrupted with a suggestion of sneering smile.

"If that's intended as a threat, Leighton, I have nothing to fear from you—nothing at all!"

"I am not threatening," Leighton retorted angrily. "But you have placed me in a position where I must fight for my own life—and the happiness of Cynthia—and I shall——"

"Better leave Cynthia out of this, young man."

"I cannot leave her out." Leighton turned to the Commissioner: "I will tell you exactly what happened in this room while I was here tonight," he said. "Whether or not I can prove it, I assure you it is the truth. And I ask you to detain Mr. Kent until I have told my story. Let him deny the facts if he dares!"

Roscoe Kent answered this with a shrug.

"My dear Mr. Commissioner! If the young man feels he can gain anything by having me here—or if it will satisfy you——"

"I think you had better stay," the Commissioner answered quietly. "Now, Mr. Leighton—wait, is my stenographer ready?"

Gerald Leighton proceeded with his statement, the police stenographer making a record of it. Leighton spoke in a manner that suggested he was suppressing a natural passion with difficulty. He breathed rapidly, his face flushed and paled, his hands clasped nervously.

"I have been Mr. Kent's confidential secretary for the past five years. Within the last two years I have frequently spent a week to a month at a time in his home or with him on his business trips, and in this way I met and loved his daughter. Miss Kent returned my love. We became engaged."

Leighton hesitated painfully.

"I think it is unnecessary to say that Kent did not approve our engagement. He made it plain enough to us! He accused me frequently of being a fortune hunter, of trapping his daughter into the engagement for my own gain! Our relations were not the pleasantest. But Cynthia Kent is of age, and can marry whom she chooses. She

chose to promise herself to me, and it was immaterial to me whether her father ever gave her a cent of his money! Mr. Kent was obliged to give his consent to our marriage this year, or see us married in any event—and for reasons of his own, principally, I think, the wish to avoid any public comment on his affairs, he gave his consent.

"I mention this reluctantly, but, gentlemen, I think it should be told. To me it is quite plain why Mr. Kent has taken this opportunity to leave me under suspicion of murder!"

Roscoe Kent continued to stare coolly about the room. By his manner one would guess he had heard nothing. The others were gravely silent until Markman prompted:

"You mean, I suppose, that Mr. Kent is glad of a chance to break off this match?"

"I mean that exactly," said Leighton. He proceeded:

"Less than a month ago I was surprised at a visit to Mr. Kent's office by Rudolph Bleecker. Mr. Kent admitted him to his private room, and they were together more than an hour. They parted on apparent terms of friendship. I say that I was surprised, because the reputation of Rudolph Bleecker was generally known among men of business. To put it bluntly, Bleecker was known as an adventurer—a blackmailer—a man who wormed out secrets by underhand methods, and accepted hush-money from those interested in keeping the secrets. Rudolph Bleecker was not the sort of man whom reputable persons dealt with——"

Roscoe Kent interrupted calmly.

"So far as Rudolph Bleecker enters into this, the statement that he came to see me is a most amazing lie."

Leighton flushed red and barely restrained an impulsive gesture against his employer.

"Steady!" Detective Markman called warningly. "Mr. Leighton, have you any proof—can you find any witnesses of Bleecker's visit at Mr. Kent's office?"

Leighton thought a moment, and shook his head sadly.

"No, sir. The visit was made after business hours, subject to an appointment by telephone which I handled personally. No, sir, I can't prove it."

Markman looked grave.

"Go on," he suggested.

"After that visit by Bleecker I heard no more of him until this morning. At that time another telephone call came for Mr. Kent. I answered it, as I always do, and was instructed to tell Mr. Kent that Bleecker was on the wire." Leighton hesitated again. "I can't prove it was Bleecker!" he burst out in anguish. "I don't even know it was Bleecker—yet I do know it, by his voice, by what followed! It was his voice, but I have no proof! Mr. Kent sent for me soon after this. He told me in confidence that Bleecker had certain information concerning himself—information which would damage him in a business and personal way if it became known. He told me that Bleecker was after hush-money, and he must give him an answer tonight. Roscoe Kent gave me the key to his own safe deposit box, and instructed me to remove twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of Treasury notes and convert them into cash. I did it. Then Mr. Kent told me to bring the twenty-five thousand dollars to this apartment at eight o'clock tonight and hand it to Bleecker. I did as I was ordered.

"The money was in thousand dollar notes, twenty-five of them, just as I got it from the bank, enclosed in a plain envelope. I arrived here at eight, and came to this apartment, as the hall boy has told you. Because I knew that the business was highly confidential, that a chance recognition might cause gossip and injure my employer, I pulled my cap low and hid my face in my collar.

"Mr. Bleecker opened his door, and admitted me when I told him whence I came. We came into this same room and sat down, Mr. Bleecker talking at random about the late spring and the unpleasantness of the night."

"You were alone together?" the Commissioner asked.

"We were alone," Leighton said. "I am certain, because I hesitated about my confidential business. Bleecker assured me nobody else was in the apartment, and bade me

look around to satisfy myself. I did look around, in every room and closet, for I placed no reliance on Bleecker's word. We were alone. The door was locked. The windows were closed. Nobody was near.

"When I was satisfied of this, I told Bleecker I had brought the price agreed upon between him and Kent. I handed him the envelope. He counted the money, replaced it in the envelope, and placed the envelope in his inner coat pocket. 'Tell Roscoe Kent that everything is all right. I pledge my word for it,' Bleecker said to me.

"I was impatient to leave. I did not care to risk recognition in Bleecker's apartment or near it, and have anybody link my employer's name with the blackmailer. Bleecker was in great good humor and gossipy. I suppose it took twenty or twenty-five minutes to get the business settled, and then, as I was rising, Bleecker's big cat stalked into the room and rubbed my leg.

"I am fond of cats, and this one, which is particularly large and the handsomest Siamese I ever ran across, attracted my attention in the pantry when I looked about the apartment. It was gnawing a bone out there, and I stopped to pet it. When the cat came in and rubbed me Bleecker noticed my interest and, taking the animal on his knee, told me its history. It was perhaps twenty minutes later that I left. Bleecker knew a great many interesting things about various breeds of cats, and talked very entertainingly. I left him sitting in that chair, where the Commissioner sits now, stroking the cat. I glanced at my watch as I left. It was a quarter of nine. I let myself out of the door, and being unable to get the elevator, walked down the stairs and found myself locked in, as you know."

Leighton twisted his clasped hands nervously.

"That is all!" he added hoarsely. "I have told you everything, and every word is true. I carried out Kent's instructions to the letter and used every means to avoid recognition and gossip, and because of that I find myself accused of a murder. Yet I can prove nothing—except this: In the pocket of Rudolph Bleecker's coat there should be a plain envelope containing twenty-five one-thousand-dollar bills."

Markman glanced at the Commissioner, his eyebrows raised in a mute question.

"There was no such envelope found on the body—nor anywhere about this flat."

Gerald Leighton sank his head between his hands and stared fixedly at the floor. His attitude expressed the hopelessness of his situation.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SIAMESE CAT

FORD MARKMAN, always soft-hearted toward distress, looked at the prisoner, and was moved to rise from his chair and stand beside him, a comforting hand on his shoulder.

"Mr. Leighton," said the old detective, "if what you have told us is the truth, be assured you have nothing to worry about. Sooner or later the truth is always proved. Always!"

Leighton answered moodily:

"'Sooner or later,' you say. If the truth cannot be proved now I am ruined. The girl I love is made desperately unhappy, and publicly shamed, and this man—my employer, whom I served faithfully—triumphs in his selfishness!"

Roscoe Kent was on his feet.

"I hope that's all you need of me, Mr. Commissioner?" His tone was casually polite. He did not give Leighton as much as a glance.

The Commissioner hesitated. At a glance from Markman, he suggested:

"Just a few minutes longer, Mr. Kent."

"Now," said Markman briskly, "Leighton, you say you left Bleecker sitting in this chair where the Commissioner sits?"

"Yes, sir. I had occupied that chair facing him, the one you were just in. The room is exactly as I left it, so far as I can remember."

"And Bleecker was stroking the cat?"

"Yes, sir."

"Pardon me, Commissioner." Markman

gestured his friend from the easy-chair, and knelt beside it, a pocket microscope in hand. "Cat hairs!" he announced, "plenty of them!"

"I'm afraid that doesn't prove much," the Commissioner said with a dry cough.

"Wait! And, Leighton, you say the door was closed, and all the windows? You examined them?"

"The place was tightly locked."

"Aha! Has any gentleman here seen Bleecker's big cat?"

Markman's question provoked an interchange of glances. Heads were shaken.

Markman questioned the patrolmen, Carr and Moore, who found the body. Both were insistent that there had been no cat in the apartment. Both were certain no cat had darted into the hall when they opened the door to discover Bleecker's body. At the Commissioner's direction the flat was searched again. No cat was found.

Markman received the news with a smile.

"Of course not," he agreed. "Look here! I've been watching him this last half-hour!"

They followed his gesture, and saw, outside one of the closed windows, the form of a large cat. The beast had pressed its face close against the glass. They could see its mouth in plaintive entreaty, though the glass muffled the sound it made.

It was a curious cat of smoky gray color, around its large eyes two big rims of sooty black that gave it an uncanny stare.

They stared back at the cat, fascinated, reading into its presence outside the window a hint of developments to come.

"Holy saints!" Patrolman Carr exclaimed in a whisper, "the critter looks like the devil himself!"

Carr strode toward the window, and was about to raise the sash, but Markman sprang after him and dragged him back.

"Let nobody go near that window or any other window," Markman said sternly. "Carr and Moore, when you examined the windows of this apartment, you found them all shut?"

"All shut tight," the two answered in chorus.

"Yet you didn't notice that cat?"

"Weren't looking for cats," Moore explained.

"If it sat quietly outside on the ledge, it would not be noticed," Markman agreed. "And when you examined the windows, I suppose you glanced out to be sure there is no fire escape or means of access to them?"

"Sure," said Carr. "I raised that pantry window and looked along the wall. I could see there wasn't any ladder, or any other way to reach a window from the outside, unless a man had wings, so I closed the sash again."

"Is this building watched from the street?"

"Yes, Mr. Markman. When the boy said it was a murder, I called two men off another beat and brought them along. They've been watching the fire escape, and all around, from the minute we got here."

"Splendid!" Markman cried. His shrewd eyes sparkled. "Mr. Commissioner, I think we'll have a look at the roof of this building, just you and I."

"The roof!" the Commissioner exclaimed.

"The roof," Markman answered, and added gravely: "And be ready to meet trouble when you get there. We may find it!"

CHAPTER SIX

ON THE ROOF

MARKMAN'S last words were given in a confidential aside, to which his friend the Commissioner nodded a grave assent. Roscoe Kent claimed their attention at this moment.

"Really, Commissioner!" Kent exclaimed, "haven't you taken up enough of my time? All this talk about cats isn't getting us anywhere, and my engagement this evening——"

"Mr. Kent," the Commissioner answered sternly, "I am very sorry to inconvenience you, but murder is a more important matter than any other engagement you may have. I must ask you to remain in this apartment for the present."

"It's ridiculous!" Kent fumed. "You are

making me a party to a solemn hokus-pocus that merely cloaks the fact that your police force is inadequate to discover anything about a simple crime."

"Nevertheless, you had better remain," the Commissioner suggested firmly.

"And everybody stay away from the windows," Markman added as they left the apartment. "Carr and Moore, you see that this instruction is carried out."

With the master key obtained from the hall man, Markman unlocked the door that guarded a short stair to the roof. The roof was thirty feet above the level of the sixteenth floor.

The Commissioner detained the elderly detective a moment at the door. "Do you think Leighton is telling the truth?"

"Can you doubt it!"

"Putting personal impressions aside, which is my business, I can doubt anything that is not proved, my dear Markman!"

"But his story is proved! That cat was in the room when Leighton talked with Bleecker. There is no reason to suppose that Leighton would invent an inconsequential detail like that! Besides, he had cat hairs on his clothes. The cat was in the room when he left. Now the cat sits outside of the window on a stone ledge two feet wide. The windows were shut when Leighton was here. They were shut when the patrolmen came. Between the time that Leighton left and the patrolmen entered that window was opened, and the cat got out."

"Quite likely Bleecker opened the window himself and let the cat out," the Commissioner exclaimed.

Markman shook his head.

"Why let a cat out onto a two-foot window ledge?" he smiled. "Is that a cat promenade? Nonsense, my dear man! No cat in its right mind would spend a cold, rainy night sitting on a narrow ledge outside a warm room! But that window was opened. It was opened by some person who frightened the cat—a stranger whose sudden appearance terrified the animal and caused it to bolt through the open window—a stranger who came in through the window, whose abrupt entry sent Bleecker running to the telephone, and scared the cat into the night—the murderer, in other words. And that is the man who let himself down from the roof of this building by a rope. Unless he is sharper than I think he is, we'll find him up there now."

"We'd better be pretty quiet about it, then," the Commissioner grumbled.

Cautiously they unlocked the heavy door at the foot of the stair. An electric light showed them a bare passage and the steps leading above. The stair and passage terminated in a small pent-house which had a door giving on the roof. The men ascended noiselessly and found the second door closed.

"A spring lock. Can't be opened from outside," the Commissioner pointed out. "What sort of murderer would lock himself up here—how the devil did he get here?"

Markman shook his head impatiently. Before opening the door he extinguished the electric bulb in the pent-house, leaving the stair and passage pitch black. Patiently, cautiously, he slipped the spring catch, and pushed the door wide.

A gust of rain swept in upon them.

They huddled against the wall, out of the blast, accustoming their vision to the sudden darkness.

From the panorama of crowding roofs below, that seemed to fill all space like a vast sea, came a subdued glow of street lamps, electric signs, lighted windows, a glow that made the rainy night like a faint, orange cloud.

Their ears recognized and catalogued new sounds: The slap-slap of a halliard whipping against a flagpole, the ceaseless murmuring undertone from the city, the swishing of wind and rain. They were prepared now, senses alert for any human presence.

By a pressure of the hand and a brief gesture Markman indicated that the Commissioner should remain at the door of the pent-house, to cut off any escape in that direction. The detective, stooping low to avoid showing a silhouette against the glow of the city, began to make a cautious round of the large, flat, graveled roof.

The Commmissioner's impression was that Markman vanished as completely as if

he had leaped the low parapet into the void. There was no sight or sound of him. The Commissioner waited with the best patience he could manage.

A sudden scuffling of feet upon gravel startled the Commissioner to action. The sound was followed by the faint noises of two bodies moving in unison, heavy breathing, a subdued groan.

"Markman!" the Commissioner shouted.

"This way—to—your—right. Here!"

Obeying these gasping instructions, the Commissioner circled the dark roof, and came upon his friend locked in the embrace of a man who fought with the energy of ten. As the Commissioner found them the two shot out from the deep shadow of a big chimney and went rolling toward the parapet. They collided with the low wall, and struggled there. Then they rose into view again, and one of them hung far out over the void, fighting desperately to avoid being thrown to his death.

The Commissioner sped toward the fighting pair. It was Markman who was down. He caught a glimpse of the elderly man's gray hair as his body was inched outward by savage strength.

The Commissioner had drawn his revolver, but put up his weapon as he leaped. His fingers locked in the stranger's collar, and with a mighty heave he jerked him backward.

Markman rolled off the parapet onto the roof, sat up slowly, gasping, and finally arose.

The Commissioner was holding his murderous opponent at the pistol's point.

"He jumped me," Markman panted. "Hiding behind—that—chimney-stack."

"He won't jump anybody again," the Commissioner promised grimly. "Now, you! This way!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE REPAIRMAN.

THE entrance of Markman and the Commissioner, between them a rain-sodden, disheveled stranger with a face streaked with blood from fresh cuts and scratches, caused a sensation among the group waiting in Rudolph Bleecker's apartment.

Since his capture the stranger had said not a word. He now stood blinking in the light, turning his glance from one to the other like a man whose wits were woolgathering.

"Well," he demanded hoarsely, "what's the answer? What's it all about?"

"Who are you?" the Commissioner demanded. "Better tell the truth; you're under arrest."

"Arrest! Holy smoke! Sa-a-a-y——"

"Say it in plain English, and stop stalling," the Commissioner advised him curtly. "What were you doing on the roof?"

"That's a good one! Look here, I'm H. Lavegne of the Acme Sign Works. I'm a repairman. Electrician—see?"

"Well?"

"What was I doing on the roof? That's a hot one! I was trying my damnedest to get off it, that's what. Listen! I was sent up there today to repair that electric sign——"

Jenks, the hall man, spoke up:

"That's right! The sign went out of order last night. I reported it, and the day man told me an electrician came this afternoon. He said one of the janitors let him out of the building."

"The day man's a liar," Lavegne declared hotly. "Nobody let me out. A fine dump this is! They send me up on that roof, and there's a spring lock on the door, and it blows shut, and there I've been, yelling myself hoarse, bruising my fists hammering on the door, for hours! Finally I gave it up and crawled behind a chimney to get out of the rain. I must have gone to sleep. Next thing I know I'm having a dream about some guy trying to throw me off the roof, and I wake up fighting for my life with this man." He nodded at Markman.

"Well!" the Commissioner exclaimed. He shot a sly glance at his friend Markman. If this was the truth, he had a laugh on the old detective he would remember for a long time. To Lavegne he said:

"You can prove who and what you are?"

"Certainly! Here's my business card." He

tendered a dirty one. "Ask the building superintendent about me. And look around by that chimney and you'll find my repair kit."

"We'll do that," Markman promised. "Carr and Moore, look that roof over for this man's tools." He accompanied the patrolmen to the door. "And look for a rope," he added in a low tone, "a long rope—or anything else of any kind or description, and bring down all that you find." Markman returned from the door. "We'd better search this man," he said.

"Search away," the prisoner growled. "I wish you'd dry my clothes while you're doing it. I near froze out in all that rain!"

"We'll do that, too," Markman promised, his eyes twinkling through a frame of numerous cuts and bruises. "Because we're going to strip you, anyway, right down to the skin. I have an idea that somewhere about you there is hidden twenty-five one-thousand-dollar bills."

"I have an idea you're off your nut!" Lavegne snapped.

It seemed as if he must be right.

They stripped him of all his clothes, and examined each piece with minute care, ripping out lining from coat and vest, even prying out the insoles of his shoes. The prisoner had no money concealed about him.

The building superintendent identified Lavegne as the electrician who had come to the apartment house that afternoon. The day hall man was found and added his identification. Finally Lavegne's employer, head of the sign works, arrived to vouch for him.

"That's my man," he declared. "Pretty good workman. He's been with us the last ten days."

"Ten days is all," Lavegne declared promptly. "You can find another guy to take my job tomorrow. I've had enough!"

The Commissioner drew Markman aside.

"I think we'll have to let him go," he said. "We can't fasten anything on him!"

Markman shook his head obstinately.

"I don't believe I'm wrong! Wait, here are Carr and Moore."

The patrolmen came in dripping.

"No rope," they announced. "Nothing but this tool bag. It's got pliers and wire tape and such stuff in it—and this felt hat——"

"My hat!" Lavegne declared. "Gimme my hat!"

Markman intercepted his outstretched hand.

"Let's see that hat. Yours, is it?"

"Certainly! Don't you see my initials in it?"

"Why, yes," Markman murmured, "so I do! A jaunty hat. Quite new, too——"

With a sudden shout Lavegne leaped at the detective, and only the promptness of the patrolmen prevented more trouble. For Markman, examining the hat casually, suddenly ripped out its silken lining.

A shower of paper currency fluttered out and scattered over the floor. Each printed slip was a new thousand dollar note.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"AS YE SOW——"

WILLING hands gathered the paper money from the floor and handed it to Markman. He counted over the bills.

"Twenty-five," he announced. "Twenty-five thousand dollars. You handed that amount to Bleecker, Mr. Leighton?"

"I did. Furthermore, at the office I have a record of the serial numbers of the bills, a record I made for my own protection if Mr. Kent ever doubted my disposition of his money—or I lost it by accident."

Markman turned on the prisoner sternly.

"I will see that you are charged with the murder of Rudolph Bleecker," he said.

Lavegne shrugged.

"You've got me. I don't care, much. Bleecker had it coming to him, and I'm glad it was me that did it. The only thing I'm surprised at is your getting me. I had it all figured out I could get away easily!"

Markman shook his head sadly.

"They always have it figured out like that!" he said.

"As you've got evidence enough to convict me, I may as well come clean," said the man.

"It will help your case at the trial," said the detective.

"Very well, then, here she goes. I fixed up my alibi," Lavegne continued. "I got a regular job with the sign works. I found out first that they had the Barrington Arms account. Then I got up to the roof two days ago and put their sign on the blink so's I'd be sent for. And I didn't use any rope to get in that window and tackle Bleecker, either. Nothing clumsy like that! I used that coil of wire that's there in my kit bag. That's strong enough to hold an elephant.

"So I came over the roof hanging by that wire. Bleecker was just letting a visitor out the door. I waited till he was alone, opened the window softly, and jumped in. That damned cat of his made a fuss and spit at me, and that's how he saw me. I shot him while he was trying to telephone."

Lavegne's cold-blooded statement left them silent with awe. The man went on with angry vehemence:

"And I say he had it coming to him! The dirty crook! Look! Years ago, when I was just a kid holding my first job, this Bleecker came to me and offered me money to steal a bunch of letters out of a letter file."

"The Nevada Sugar letters!" the Commissioner exclaimed.

"Yeah, that was the company. I stole the letters, and Bleecker gave me a cheesy five hundred dollars. Then he sold the letters for ten thousand dollars. That was bad enough, but he kept on using me, threatening to turn me up to the police if I didn't do his dirty work. And he paid me starvation wages at that. He made a crook out of me, and wouldn't even give me enough money to enjoy life!

"I found out about this last deal of his. I tapped his telephone, and found out just when and how he'd get paid for it. It was the chance I'd been waiting years to get! I framed everything to nail him and get the money—money he owed me, when you come to that. You can't buy a man's life for a dime! It ain't fair! What's more, I'll tell you what this last piece of Bleecker's dirty work was about."

All eyes were on Lavegne. Roscoe Kent, on the outskirts of the listeners, stole quietly toward the door. He had reached that exit when Markman called him sharply by name.

"Come back here," he said sternly, "it won't hurt you to listen!"

Kent saw it was useless. He returned with a shrug.

"Bleecker," Lavegne declared, with a venomous glance at Kent, "was this man's brother—Roscoe Kent's brother. And Kent didn't want it known, because a lot of business people knew what kind of blackmailer Bleecker was. These two brothers had a joint interest in an estate that was settled about a year ago, and Kent tried to hold out all the money. Bleecker told his brother he'd start a suit for settlement and tell the world all about their relationship. That's why Kent sent him twenty-five thousand dollars tonight."

Roscoe Kent had turned red and white again. He tried to stare down the glances that were turned on him, but failed. He burst out sharply:

"Suppose it's true! I can't deny it. I don't deny it. I am his brother. That's no crime, is it?"

"It is no crime," the Commissioner agreed.

"And I gave him his share of the estate. That's no crime, either, is it?"

The Commissioner agreed again.

"That is no crime, Mr. Kent. We shall call on you as a witness, but you are guilty of no crime. You may go. Only"—he faced the financier sternly—"while you are guilty of no crime, Mr. Kent, I heartily wish that there was a statute on the books making it a crime to be a man of your kind—a man who trusts a faithful employee to do his dirty work and refuses to help that employee when he is in trouble. I wish that was a crime, Mr. Kent!"

"It isn't," Kent declared shortly. "It isn't, Mr. Commissioner, so——"

The door closed behind Kent.

Markman turned to Gerald Leighton.

"Take my advice, Mr. Leighton, marry Kent's daughter just as fast as you can, and get her away from the influence of a most despicable father."

"I will!" Leighton vowed.

And he did.

Another Perfect Crime

By NEIL McCONLOGUE

"WHY is it," said Madden, looking up from his police-log, a worn, muchly handled book in which the Chief kept a record of the official voyage of his department, "that the criminal doesn't understand that the manifold potentiality of the law of compensation never sleeps, that circumstance conspires continually against criminal activity?"

"Possibly"—I countered—"because he doesn't weigh his game; because he rushes headlong into actions," is the reply I offered.

Lew Madden had asked a simple, but huge, question."

"Too bad we can't offer our records for public perusal and give a percentage of the successful cases of law dodging—maybe that would aid in our work."

"It's as plain as the nose on your face," continued the Chief, "that right strolls the mountain-tops, hence its supervision."

As he placed the leather-covered volume in a desk drawer the telephone rang. The party at the other end spoke loud enough for me to hear the conversation from his end.

"That you, Lew? This is Captain Shea —Park Station. All of my crowd are down at the river-front fire, been there since early evening, and I just got a call from an apartment in the Lake-View Court—name's Robinson Hough. Something's wrong up there, and I was wondering if you'd send a man to take charge for me until I get one of my boys there."

"I'm going up that way myself, Captain; I'll drop in and let you hear from me later. Yes; I made a note of the name, address and apartment number."

The Chief of 'Gutterside' turned to the closet and grabbed his hat.

"Something doing up in Jim Shea's district—want to come along?" said Madden.

I nodded.

Fifteen minutes later we reached the building. Two Ming pottery lions stood guard on each side of the entrance, and a wide-eyed negro seemed to be awaiting our arrival.

"Poh-leece?" excitedly inquired the darky.

Madden nodded.

"Right this way, sah—elevatah's on the right."

The elevator door slammed into place, bounded back; the operator stopped his car, re-slammed the door and up we went to the sixth floor.

An important servant awaited us at the far end of the wide hallway approaching the front end of the building.

"Robinson's apartment?" said Madden, before he spun the pages of his little notebook.

"Robinson Hough's apartment, sir," eagerly replied the servant.

"Telephone the police?" followed Lew.

"Yes, sir; step right in, sir. Step in first, if you will, sir," requested the frightened man.

Madden entered and I followed, with the man-servant bringing up the rear. We crossed a long private hall, that ran parallel with the outer main vestibule, and entered the apartment.

Intuition seemed to guide Madden to the proper room.

The odor of cigar smoke still lingered in the silk curtains that drooped lazily about windows that overlooked Central Park. On a center-table of English reed, one of the many pieces of specially built furniture

standing in different parts of the room, a cut-glass bowl held grapes; part of one of the bunches hung over the side of the dish, and many of the little members of the fruit family had dropped from their moorings and rolled to the floor, where some one's heel had promptly immolated them. Upon a chiffonier stood several lanky bottles, but one had been set upon, each with a different hue, a suspicious coloring that sparkled through transparent glass.

Dumb-bells hung against one of the walls, just above crossed, slender rapiers that no doubt had known one-time service.

On another side of the room bulbous-looking boxing-gloves occupied space between two autographed photographs—likenesses of two popular actresses. Ambiguity was rampant in this, as it was common knowledge that the two artistes despised each other. On other spaces about the room queens of song and dance and beauty beamed down upon all they surveyed.

On the davenport, upholstered in light tan leather, at the end where a large pillow was stuffed into a corner, lay an honest-eyed bull-terrior, its paws partly covering a dark, significant stain that began at the wrinkled corner of the pillow, grew larger and darker and more sinister on the seat of the davenport, from which it flowed to and over the side, leaving a pool upon the rug.

The dog watched and listened as Madden spoke.

"What's this?" The sleuth pointed to the ominous puddle.

"Blood, sir," returned the short, bald, collarless and pale valet, who stood with his long arms hanging helplessly at his side.

"The master has been shot—or has shot himself; he is in the bedroom," rambled the frighted man.

One look into an adjoining room and Madden saw the futility of advancing farther. Over the detective's shoulder the leaking bullet-hole could be unmistakably nothing but a vent, from which life had escaped; at least that was my view. Madden evidently felt the same way about it, for he turned back to the prime scene of the crime.

"What occurred—and when?" pryed the detective.

"I was sleeping, sir; at ten minutes past ten I was awakened by a shot, a pistol shot, sir. I reached for the wall-switch, to turn on the light, and my watch fell to the floor—it stopped at ten minutes past ten." Suiting his movements to his words, the man handed Madden a watch. The hands were at rest—at ten past ten.

"The lady called before I retired," continued the valet.

"The lady?" Madden interrupted. "What lady?"

"Miss Kerwin, sir. Miss Kitty Kerwin, I believe, is her name. She has known the master for some time."

"What become of her?" asked the officer, looking straight at the servant.

"I lifted the poor man out of this mess," said the bald valet.

"But what happened, so far as you know, before you removed the body?" interjected Madden.

"After I partly dressed myself I hurried in here; Miss Kerwin was stooped over Mister Hough. The poor man was on his knees, sort of laying the upper part of his body on the davenport for relief. The little dog was licking the man's trembling hand and whining terribly. It was terrible, terrible, sir. I hope I never have another experience of the kind.

"Naturally my help, what I could think to give, was given to Mister Hough. I lifted him out of this mess and carried him to his room. He was breathing—not robustly, sir, but he was breathing. The last I saw of the lady was when I said, 'Why! Mister Hough's dead!' The next time I straightened up she was gone, sir. Then I telephoned the police."

Madden swept the room; his glance hovered upon the diffused photograph of the woman. Kitty Kerwin, idol of the theatrical hour, looked back at him. At the very moment her name blinked in electric lights that were shot into the great bronze canopy which poked its malachite head above the entrance to the Olio Theatre.

"Anything been disturbed—been moved, —since you entered?" asked the officer.

"Nothing but the body," assured the servant, whose composure was slowly returning.

"Why didn't you hang the receiver back on the telephone hook? Or is that the phone you used in calling us?"

"I guess the excitement was too much for me, maybe."

Madden moved the hook up and down and Central answered.

"Operator, get me Headquarters—Police Headquarters; what other Headquarters is there?" A typical challenge, not unusual, coming from a man as wrapped in the art of policing as is Madden. "Hello—Mooney, Murphy—— Who? Oh! it's you, Goldman. Switch me onto 'Gutterside'—yes, thanks."

In a moment 'Gutterside' station answered.

"Marty, give me the Identification Room. Hello, Tyler, Madden talking. I'm up here at apartment Six, Lake-View Court, near 69th Street; name's Hough. Not Goff! Hough—H-o-u-g-h! Take a machine and come up—at once. Bring your light and dark stuff, both the French chalk and the lamp-black, also the fixative spray—better bring a camera along; there may be some wall and door-frame shots to be taken. Make it snappy!" And the officer hung up.

"Get me a screw-driver," ordered Lew, and the servant left the room.

"Let's see where he was plummeted," suggested the Chief, and we entered the bedroom.

The body was crosswise on the bed. The head tipped enough to one side to show the yawning wound at the base of the skull.

"Shot from the rear," murmured the sleuth.

"Indicating, perhaps," I ventured, "that a man did the job."

Madden smiled.

"How do you get that way?" he asked.

"I heard some one make that guess and it sounded pretty logical."

"I suppose only men shoot—from behind. What about the recent Sherrod case. Did 'Red-Pepper' Rucker shoot from behind?"

"But there was no woman involved in the Rucker-Sherrod case, was there?" I answered.

"Oh!" Madden's brows lifted in splendid sarcasm. "Well, maybe this case, which rates our thought at the present, has a woman in it—maybe not. Possibly a man did the shooting—and perhaps a woman stepped out of her character long enough to pour the lead in—from behind; but——"

"The screw-driver, sir," said the servant.

Walking to the door, from where he turned to survey the room, Lew aimed a glance at the fully composed valet.

"Did you enter, after hearing the shot, through this door leading into this hall; or did you come by way of that one?" Madden pointed to a door on the other side, one neither of us had inspected.

"I came through the door where you are, sir," assured the servant.

Some one thumped upon the outer door.

"Tyler," said Madden, as he proceeded to remove the knob of the door he kneeled before. "Let him in."

"Had to fall back upon the old finger-print department, eh, Chief," good-naturedly open-fired Tyler. He swept the place and gave me a 'Hello! Right in the midst of it, as usual."

As Madden picked a small object off the floor he called Tyler's attention to something beneath the davenport.

"See what that is on the floor there, Tyler."

It was a purse. Tyler lay the contents upon the center-table, calling them off as he dropped them upon the table-mat: "Cosmetic accoutrement—rouge and lip-stick; gold powder-kit; small, silk kerchief and another of soft linen—initials 'K. K.,' embroidered in both—a sheet of yellow—it's a wire, Chief; want to read it?"

"Let fly," came Madden's request.

The finger-printer expert smoothed the crumpled paper upon the table and read aloud:

"Kitty Kerwin,
Olio Theatre,
City—

Come at once to the apartment when you have finished your act."

"It's just signed—'Robinson,'" said Tyler.

"Guess, as our critic was telling the boys the other night," I added, "Miss Kerwin was seriously considering going into the Movies under the direction of Robinson Hough."

"What time did Miss Kerwin arrive?" Madden looked up at the servant.

"Shortly before ten, sir," answered the man.

"What was the topic—between Hough and the woman?" asked Lew.

"I can't say, sir. Generally when Mister Hough had guests I was either excused or served by way of the humidor," and the man's hand pointed to the little door at the side of the entrance leading into the room we had not yet inspected.

"Tonight Mister Hough asked me if I wanted to take in his latest release—a big picture. But I was too tired and went to bed, intending to get a night's rest. Up to the time I left for my room I had not heard a word between them; it is hard to hear when nothing is open but the humidor-service vent, sir."

In a few minutes the doorknob was removed; prints were found on it and on the door as well, and were photographed, as were the finger-prints of the servant.

"What's your name?" asked Madden.

"James Hathaway, sir."

"Well, Hathaway," added Lew, "I think you are in the clear—absolved from all suspicion. However, don't leave the city unless it is urgent and you first advise me as to where you intend going and the date of your return. In the meantime, should you recall overlooking anything that might help us, let me hear from you, promptly—and no doubt you will be rewarded for whatever information you give."

We left the building—Tyler, to hurry down to the station to make his pictures; Lew Madden and I strolled to Broadway, where the Chief entered a drugstore booth, from where he telephoned Captain Shea, of the Park Police Station.

"I told Shea that I'd like to follow this thing a little further," said Madden, after coming out from the booth." They are pressed for men right now, and he was glad of my interest."

A taxi-cab carried us to the Olio stage-entrance.

"Miss Kerwin left the theatre right after her specialty," assured the gray-hearded door-tender. "Lives at The Seminole; ought to be able to catch her there."

Another telephone booth was visited.

"Hello," said Madden. "Ring Miss Kerwin's room."

Twice the actress's suite was called, but there was no reply.

"Hasn't she a maid?" asked Lew.

"You bet you," sparkled the hotel's switchboard operator. "But the maid leaves when Miss Kerwin goes to the evening show."

"Could you tell me where I might find Miss Gladia Glenn?" The Chief's words recalled the two pictures of the talented enemies which hung side by side on the wall of Hough's apartment.

"Nope!" assured the girl. "But if I'm any kind of a guesser, I can tell you where you won't find her. Betwixt you and me, you'll never catch her in company with Miss Kerwin. Talk about Juliet's folks and the Romeo stock being peeved at each other! Hmmm, you'd be surprised!"

Zip-zit-zit, and the operator had switched off the connection.

For a moment Lew continued to draw queer little figures upon the pad that lay upon the arm-rest on the wall phone. A square was made to burst with arrow-heads, they in turn were filled in and as readily crossed and blurred with robust strokes. Then the Chief etched in a wooden soldier sort of figure and melted him from view with an oblong coffin-like box.

"What's Melvin Earl's address—his New Rochelle home address?" came the detective's question.

I took the well-worn directory from the wall and gave the street and number.

A blow-out proved to us that it is sometimes more than a matter of "forty-five minutes from Broadway" to New Rochelle. It took us a little better than sixty to swing to the street where Earl's residence loomed above a high, verdant hedge.

The gentleman himself answered the bell.

"I'm from Police Headquarters," Lew said, perhaps thinking of the telephone operator's query a little earlier in the evening. "I'd like to talk with you, Mister Earl."

"Come right in, if you please; it is a trifle too late to entertain porch company."

We followed the slightly stooped form to an acre of space set aside as combination library and study.

"Smoke, gentlemen?" ask the host. We both accepted cigars.

"Sorry to have to arouse you, Mister Earl," Madden began. "But you know what the police business is." Possibly wishing to get the theatrical man in the best of humor, Madden added: "With you show folks late hours mean but little, I believe."

"Our calling keeps us into the small hours, sometimes." As he spoke Earl studied his words and us. "Then again we romp to our cradles at an early hour. It amuses me, at this moment, to dwell upon the fact that, between a minister and a police officer, this night threatens to be a long one and a late one. What was the nature of your visit, Mr.—er?"

"Madden," added Lew.

"Mr. Madden?" asked Earl, tossing his half-smoked cigar into the embers on the hearth and lighting a cigarette.

"Miss Kitty Kerwin is, I believe, under contract to you?" said Lew.

"Yes; her contract has nearly two years more——"

Madden broke in with "She isn't fully satisfied with the terms, the bulbous publicity in front of the Olio—is that what prompts her desire to enter the motion picture field?"

"As far as I know," assured Earl, frowning slightly, "Kitty—Miss Kerwin—seems quite satisfied with her contract and present engagement. In fact, it is only lately that I added another boost to her salary—sort of a little token in view of the fine advances she has made at the Olio. It is really she who has kept a wobbly musical show working."

"You know Robinson Hough, I suppose?" The name brought a slight color to Earl's face.

"Hough, the motion-picture director?"

"Yes," replied Lew. "Lives at Lake-View Court apartment, in the city."

Before the host had gone beyond admitting that he knew the late director Madden said: "Hough was shot this evening at ten minutes past ten!"

"Ten minutes past ten!" exclaimed the startled man. "Why, at ten minutes past ten, for no reason whatsoever, I remarked to our minister, Doctor Biggs—who lives next-door, and who was here with me until shortly after that time—I said to the doctor: 'How quickly the evening has gone. It is ten-ten already; I had no idea it was so late.' Then the doctor arose and left. But you say poor Hough was killed in his apartment?"

"No, I just said he was shot; however, it did occur at his apartment," said the Chief, glancing quickly at me.

"As I was going to say, Miss Kerwin was the last person, so far as we know, and excepting the valet, who saw Mr. Hough alive. What I wish to know is: do you shelter any knowledge or reason why this actress would kill this man in cold blood?"

"No! I do not." There was finality in the man's tone. "Though I am very well acquainted with the lady in question, yet it behooves me to not interfere or inquire about what she does away from the theatre."

Madden stooped over and, from the knotty foot of the table, quite dark when one looked down from the electric spray, that hit only the table top and permeated barely over the side, picked up a small object. He handed it to Earl.

"I noticed you feeling for the missing cuff-link, Mister Earl," said Lew. "You'll pardon my interruption, but here it is. Now, if you'll continue, please, we'll be on with the business and be out of your way."

The host's hands nervously adjusted the recovered cuff-link, after which the theatrical man assured Madden that, so far as he knew, Miss Kerwin, if she was present at all when Hough was shot, was merely there as a friend and not as an enemy, and had only run away because of the suddenness of the affair.

"Will you be in the city—say, tomorrow evening?"

"Yes," answered the theatrical man. At the same time he snapped open his watch-case, saying: "I shall drive in, getting to the theatre about eight-thirty; where shall we meet?"

"Better come over to the police station—the 'Gutterside' station—I shall be there all evening," after which we arose and left.

I slept soundly. No doubt Lew did also. Next day at noon, as I turned into the Chief's neighborhood, who did I bump into but "The Quill."

"Quite a stranger, Kenneth," I said, shaking hands.

"Hardly know the odors down here any more," good-naturedly remarked the one-time forger, whom Madden had given a chance to reform. "And I came near not coming down, at least not today."

By this time we had entered the Chief's office.

"Well!" exclaimed Lew, always glad to see young Barrows. "Sneaked away from that little wife of yours—eh," chided the detective, shaking hands with the youngster.

"Hardly; it'd be like running away from paradise," said the healthy looking chap. "But, working right out in the open, I nearly had to wait till tomorrow. Funny thing happened. You see, I take the nine-one train, that brings me down here at eleven-fifty-one; this morning, when I wound the clock, it seems that in putting it back in the little cabinet we had made for it—sort of a fancy house that the alarm clock lives in—well, I just tipped the clock to the right; that threw the "ten" figure up where the "twelve" ought to be, and as folks don't pay much attention to the position of the clock but always glance at the hands, taking it for granted that the numbers are in their proper place—I was surprised to think that the morning had slipped away and that it was ten minutes past ten. My wife noticed what was wrong, but not till a half-hour after I'd unpacked my bag. Had to dash to make the trip."

Before Kenneth Barrows had uttered the last word the Chief was talking into the telephone. While Information was looking up Madden's request, Lew sent for Tyler.

"None of those prints you made had anything behind them, so far as you know?" queried the head of the department.

"No records with any of them, Chief, if that's what you mean," promptly replied Tyler. "The door-frame and knob had three prints—yours, Hathaway's and one that I could get no line on, though the picture was clear and well-defined."

The telephone bell tinkled.

"Chief Madden, Gutterside Station, talking," said Lew. *"Who?"* he questioned. "Oh, it's Reverend Biggs! I wish you would tell me what occurred, so far as you know, at Melvin Earl's residence last evening while you were his guest."

A long conversation followed. In the meantime young Barrows and I chatted about the lack of home-runs lately.

Hanging up the receiver, the Chief mumbled: "Funny thing about this crime business—most of which would be readily unraveled did we but sing the ever-present but often unsung clue."

That evening, when Melvin Earl called, I realized what Lew meant—and what Kenneth Barrows's visit brought about, following his little story about the clock being tipped.

"You left two things undone, Earl," the Chief was saying, not even giving the theatrical magnate the title of Mister. "You had no business, forgetting to put your own watch away, to substantiate your plea to Doctor Biggs for borrowing his."

"Just what do you mean?" countered the nervous Earl.

"You told Reverend Biggs that you wanted to borrow his timepiece, as your own was out of order, so that when you awoke in the morning you wouldn't have to come downstairs to the hall or library clock to see what time it was—to note your arising hour.

"Doctor Biggs's watch is an open-face silver type—I recall you consulted your own gold watch, a hunting case model, when you gave me the time last night."

Earl scowled and looked out of the window.

"Then you should have properly adjusted your little mantel-clock, the one that was on the shelf, behind where Doctor Biggs was sitting. The one that you called Doctor Biggs's attention to—appreciating the psychology of man, knowing he takes for granted that the "twelve" numeral's usually at the top.

"That cleverly thought-out bit of business gave you two hours and ten minutes to get down here, shoot, and get back to New Rochelle; but, as I said before, you should have tipped the little clock back into its proper position."

The accused murderer remained mute.

"Then your cuff-link. It is just a common link; many of them are made—why did you not refuse it when I apparently picked it off of your carpet? You knew you had lost it at Robinson Hough's apartment."

Tyler entered. Enthusiastically he approached Madden.

"Say, Chief, that cigarette butt you handed me after coming down this morning had an impression. The print matched that on the door of Hough's house——"

"You see, Earl, the evidence, once it begins, comes tumbling in. I picked up one of your cigarettes last night—a butt-end which you squeezed sufficiently to leave a telltale impression of your index finger and thumb in nicotine; these, you have just heard, match others we found on the Hough hall-door!"

In part, Melvin Earl's signed confession read: "And as my entire financial standing depended upon whether or not Miss Kerwin continued under my management, thus supporting the run of my show at the Olio, I thought that my own way of disposing of her chances of leaving me lay in removing the cause.

"I planned, arranged and committed the murder of Robinson Hough; and may God have mercy on me!"

It was near midnight when Captain Shea, his robust tones over the telephone filling the office of Chief Madden, asked: "What was it all about—up at the Lake-View Court, Lew?"

"A murder was committed," replied the detective.

"Give me the data and we'll dispatch a man right away," came back Captain Shea's voice.

"Just send your man, send two of them, over here; we don't care about giving free board to offenders who work in your neighborhood."

Hanging up the receiver, and turning to me, the Chief said: "You were on the right trail; sure enough, a man did it—shot from the rear. But it took Kenneth's little story about the clock to act as a pivot for all of our planning."

After a moment, as an afterthought, Madden said: "Another—and it looked like a perfect crime!"

A BAIL-JUMPER AGAIN IN LIMBO

DONALD PERSCH is in jail again. Persch is said to have been one of the Gondorf gang of wiretappers. He was indicted in 1910 as the master mind in the theft of $110,000 in copper stock from the Windsor Trust Company, but a jury failed to convict. He was indicted on seven counts, including grand larceny, in 1912, but jumped bail.

Persch, a former broker, was brought back recently from Chicago by Detective Sullivan from the District Attorney's office and sent to the Tombs. If court had been in session, it was said, bail of $25,000 would have been asked.

Since Persch was last here he is said to have lived high and married a manicurist at the Hotel Morrison, Chicago, where he won fame by $100 tips. Sullivan and another detective found the boarding house where Persch and his bride lived and engaged rooms. That same night Mrs. Persch and her husband sauntered in and the latter was arrested.

The Bonehead Stunt

By W. J. CAMPBELL

BYRON DUGAN, Chief of Police, was a much worried individual. Mr. Harry Wade was in town, and had been for several weeks.

To the ordinary citizen, who attends strictly to his own affairs and only knows what is happening in the world around him by what he reads in the newspapers, this meant nothing. But with the blue-coated guardians of the law it was different. The said Harry Wade was known to them as Stumpy, the most expert handler of bogus money in the country.

The city had been flooded with spurious bills before the police hardly knew it. But upon learning that Stumpy was in town, Chief Dugan was of the opinion that he had grounds upon which to base his conclusion that this was the gentleman who could bear close watching. However, as yet police of various cities had been unsuccessful in fastening any evidence on him that any judge or jury would consider. This in the face of the fact that Wade's every movement had been under surveillance, by police and detectives, wherever he chanced to make an appearance.

Stumpy's actions were quite natural. He appeared to be living as perhaps many a man would whose means of support were such as to enable him to get along modestly and comfortably.

Occupying a small suite of rooms in a very respectable neighborhood, he lived quite alone. Every morning he went to a nearby restaurant and dined, this at about seven o'clock. Lunch came at two and the evening meal promptly at seven.

During his absence in the morning, which lasted about an hour, a woman came, cleaned and put in order his rooms, leaving immediately before or after his return. His mail was very light and he appeared to communicate with no one of a questionable character.

These were the facts that Chief Dugan had in his possession, and which he was pondering over. Yet the spurious bills kept turning up, not as frequent as at first, nor of such large denomination; but the queer was being handed the unsuspecting right before Chief Dugan and his men.

Another week slipped by. The Chief grew furious.

"Looks now as if we are a bonehead bunch," he said to John Thomas, his assistant, and that individual agreed with him.

"Stumpy's handin' out the stuff all right. Got it right in his rooms and it's up to us to find it," he finished.

"Guess we'd better get out a warrant and search the place, hadn't we, Chief?"

"Warrant nothin'," growled Dugan. "We don't need one. We're goin' right down there and search every inch of them rooms until we find the goods!"

"And what if we don't find anything?" asked Thomas. "Maybe somebody on the outside is givin' it out?"

"Stumpy is workin' alone, I believe," replied Dugan. "I'd say he's travelin' single, and got the stuff, and we're goin' to get it."

The search was made under violent protest by Wade, who followed the officers from room to room. But the most careful examination of the entire suite revealed nothing.

At last Dugan and his assistant gave it up.

"No use lookin' farther," he said. "We couldn't find the hidin' place in a year." Then, turning to Stumpy, he added:

"You're guilty all right, and we'll get you sooner or later. And don't forget it."

Stumpy smiled.

"Your pardon, Chief, but my name is Wade, and I am a free American citizen; but it doesn't seem as if I am being considered as such. You are simply jumping at conclusions. There is no evidence that I have committed any crime. A man's past record should not be considered. He may reform."

Chief Dugan snorted.

"Mr. Wade, eh? Well, to me you are Stumpy, the green-goods passer. Further, we are all free American citizens. Have you ever stopped to think that those you are fleecin' out of their good money are in the same class? And as to your reformin', I can't see it. Now listen, Stumpy, you're guilty and I'm goin' to prove it."

"You seem to take a great deal for granted," said Wade. "I assure you, however, that eventually you will find yourself badly mistaken on several points. One thing I must tell you: As a private citizen I shall exercise my rights. The next party who enters my rooms without a warrant shall be summarily dealt with. I shall throw him out. And now I wish to say good-morning, sir."

Chief Dugan and his assistant left immediately. As they walked down the street Thomas asked:

"What do you think of our friend now, Chief?"

"Just what I did at first," that officer replied, "that he's a big bluffer. He's the guilty party and the counterfeit money's in that house, but the question is to find it. I don't believe he has a fence, but if he has, we must find him. I shall place several plain-clothes men to watch the place."

Within the hour one was installed in the house directly opposite Wade's rooms and another in an apartment at the rear. These officers were to communicate with each other at least once an hour, or oftener if circumstances warranted it. Another member donned a waiter's apron at the restaurant, and a fourth was detailed to shadow the woman who cleaned Stumpy's rooms; Chief Dugan was taking no chances.

The next day was no different from any other. At seven o'clock Stumpy started to breakfast. The servant-woman as usual arrived to clean his rooms. He met her on the steps and passed a few words with her. A little after eight he returned to his rooms and the woman left.

At the time the mail carrier usually came around, Stumpy came out and stood on the steps and handed him a letter. At the next corner he was stopped by a well-dressed individual, who flashed his shield and demanded to see the letter that Stumpy had handed him. The request was granted. It was addressed to the agents who had the letting of the flat.

Late in the afternoon Chief Dugan called upon the party whose address had been on the letter, stated his reasons for the visit and asked to see it. It was handed him and read as follows:

"GENTLEMEN:

"Am inclosing money for another month's rent. I like the location, but circumstances over which I have no control may necessitate my vacating soon. Shall notify you several days in advance, if possible.

"Sincerely,

"HARRY WADE."

Did the police have the money that was in the envelope? They did, but it was a genuine bill.

At ten o'clock that evening the lights in Wade's suite were snapped out. Everything was quiet until a few minutes of seven in the morning, when the officer across the street saw Stumpy come to the window in shirt and trousers. He looked up and down the street, stretched himself, and withdrew from sight. A few minutes after the hour he opened the door, came down the steps and walked up the street toward the restaurant.

This routine was followed for the next two days. On the morning of the third day Stumpy was later in returning. It was about nine o'clock when he came back from breakfast. A wagon was in front of the flat, its driver carrying out baskets of laundry. The plain-clothes man, who was

sitting on the porch opposite, distinctly heard Stumpy ask if he would return for his laundry in the morning. Said that he was sorry, but didn't know this was their day for collection. The driver replied in the affirmative after Stumpy tossed him a coin.

The following morning, promptly at seven, the watched man departed for the restaurant. The woman-servant met him on the steps. Wade paused a moment and handed her something, presumably her wages. A few minutes before eight she left the house just as Stumpy entered it.

At exactly half-past nine the laundry wagon drew up at the curb and the same driver, accompanied by a youthful fellow, entered the building. They soon came out with a basket of laundry, laughing and joking as they deposited it in the wagon. Climbing upon the seat, they went rattling down the street.

At two o'clock the officer across the street telephoned Chief Dugan. He was satisfied something was amiss.

"I'm wondering if our friend Stumpy hasn't given us the slip, Chief," he said to that official. "But I don't see how he could? I haven't seen him since he came home a few minutes before eight this morning."

Ten minutes later the Chief arrived at the scene. He questioned the front guard. Growling, he went to the rear; but this one informed him that nobody had come or gone that way.

"There is but one thing to do," said Chief Dugan, "and that is to go inside." They entered the hall. Once inside the Chief held up his hand. They stood still and listened. All was silence.

The door to Stumpy's sitting-room stood open. Dugan and his man walked in and glanced around. A piece of paper on the library table caught the Chief's eyes. He picked it up. It was addressed to him. The Chief eagerly read:

"My Dear Chief Dugan:

"When you read this I shall be far, far away, so far that you needn't look for me. Many thanks to you and your bonehead assistants for letting my fence, the old woman-servant as you thought, and I carry on our work. You would never have known it was Slick Rhodes, would you? Played the part of a woman pretty well, didn't he, Chief? It was he who helped carry me out in the laundry basket, but I shall be out of that before it reaches the laundry, and Slick and I will be on the road to safety long before you see this.

"Regarding the 'green goods,' you were correct. I flooded the town when I first lit, and Slick kept adding a little more as we went along. It was in my room when you searched it. But you had forgotten, Chief, I have a wooden leg? Well, it's hollow and a good place to store light stuff.

"Good-by, Chief Dugan, with best regards to your bonehead assistants, because we will never meet again.

"Gratefully,
"Harry (Stumpy) Wade."

Chief Dugan grinned. "Let's see who pulled the bonehead stunt," he said. "Hale nabbed Slick Rhodes at eight-thirty this morning, secured the letter of instructions Stumpy had handed him, together with several counterfeit bills. He then made up as Slick, came down with the laundry driver and helped Stumpy out in the clothes-basket. The pair are now in jail and the only question worrying us was where the bogus money was hid. Come on," he said to the guard. "Let's go and have a look at Stumpy's artificial leg."

His First Big Job

By MONA CANGI

THE evening of January 11th in the year of the Lord nineteen hundred and twenty-three will always remain a memorable one to Chief David Burke, head of the Lincoln Detective Agency of the town of Union. The reason for this memorableness is that it marked the launching out of a young man in training, who afterwards became one of his shrewdest and fastest working detectives.

Burke was just slipping his watch back into his pocket, after noting that it was nine o'clock, when Thomas Steward, sixteen, general errand boy and also an aspirant to the calling of detective work, rushed up to the desk, waving a card in the air.

"This nervous dame is in a hurry, Chief," he said breathlessly. "Wants to see you right away."

Thomas handed the calling card to Burke and waited. The boy liked to be near his Chief, and was quite sure he was learning a great deal by just watching Burke's facial expressions when he was meditating on some difficult problem.

Burke broke the silence. "So this lady is nervous, eh, Tommy? And is she young?"

Right there Thomas was stumped.

"Gee! I don't know, Chief," he admitted, a wave of color suffusing his pale face.

"What?" demanded Burke. "You don't know whether a person is young, middle-aged, or old? And you want to become a detective, Tommy?"

"Well—well—I couldn't see her face, Chief," stammered Thomas almost tearfully. "She's wearin' a black veil. Guess she's in mourning."

"Ah, that makes a difference," replied Burke kindly. "Show the lady in, Tommy."

The next minute the boy ushered in the lady in question, but instead of going right out again he lingered at Burke's side.

"Good-evening, Miss Collett," said Burke, motioning his caller to a chair beside his desk. "You wish to consult me on urgent business?"

"Yes, sir," answered the woman, throwing back her veil. "I should have come sooner."

Thomas stared at her; then, stooping, he whispered in Burke's ear: "Young and pretty."

The next moment the room contained two people instead of three.

Thomas's judgment was correct. Georgine Collett had just turned twenty-one, and she had always been decidedly pretty.

Burke waited for her to compose herself, and then threw her into a jangle of nerves again by asking:

"You have come to speak to me about your father's death?"

"Then you know?" gasped the girl, almost starting out of her chair.

"I know, from reading the papers," smiled Burke, "that John Collett, wealthy, retired real estate dealer, died five days ago of morphine poison, and that he is survived by you, his only child, Georgine. The local police and Federal authorities are making an investigation, are they not?"

"Yes, but they're getting nowhere," replied Miss Collett emphatically, pounding a quite capable looking fist upon her knee. "I'm quite certain that my father took that morphine neither accidentally nor for the purpose of committing suicide. I believe it was cunningly substituted for the quinine he was in the habit of taking. I want to

be sure, so I wish to engage the very best detective you have on your staff."

Burke thought for a moment, then touched a buzzer button.

Thomas answered the summons with the lightning rapidity of a genii.

"Is Mason Romer still here?" asked the Chief.

"Yes, sir," answered Thomas.

"Tell him I wish to see him at once."

The boy nodded and was gone.

In another moment a medium-sized, muscular young man of twenty-eight entered the room and walked up to the Chief's desk with an easy, swinging gait. Mason Romer was neither handsome nor homely, but possessed a masterful personality. One did not have to be in his presence more than a minute to feel a sensation of confidence that he inspired.

Chief Burke presented him to Miss Collett, then explained the young woman's mission.

"Am I to take the case, Chief?" asked Romer.

Burke's eyes twinkled.

"You are to take the case," he assented.

The detective smiled and, calmly drawing up a chair, said:

"Please tell me, Miss Collett, why you suspect murder in your father's tragic death?"

"I hardly know," confessed the girl confusedly, "I just feel it. I know that sounds silly, but ever since Dad's death I have had no rest. I fought against coming here, but at last I just had to."

"There must have been something," insisted Mason, "to start you thinking in this train of thought."

Miss Collett got a better grip of her nerves, then she answered:

"Yes, you are right. It was because Dad was not alone Thursday evening just before he took the morphine. He had a visitor named Ray Bradley. Although I was not in the study—Dad had closed the door—I know that they quarreled, and that Mr. Bradley went off in a huff. He wore a blue suit and gloves when he went out."

"You mean Bradley, the rag doll manufacturer?" asked the detective.

"Yes," answered Miss Collett. "Dad retired from the realty business right after he had set up Mr. Bradley in business, two years ago. Just why Dad had dealings with that man I cannot tell. He would never allow Mr. Bradley to speak to me."

The young sleuth looked at the girl sharply.

"There is something queer about that, Miss Collett. Have you ever tried to guess at a reason for your father's strange behavior?"

"I can guess at only one reason, and that is that Mr. Bradley cannot be a trustworthy man," replied Miss Collett. "Something I heard makes me believe that I am right."

"And what was that?" asked Romer eagerly.

A wave of color spread over the girl's face and she dropped her gaze to her lap.

"I listened at the study door that evening," she confessed naively, as if weighed down by shame.

The two men laughed heartily.

"Well, you haven't committed a great crime, Miss Collett," Burke assured her. "Perhaps it will help us. Come, tell us what you heard."

"When Mr. Bradley is angry," began the girl, "his voice fairly booms. I distinctly heard him say: 'What are you backing out for when you know there's so much cold cash in it? What are you getting squeamish about?'

"And did you hear your father's answer?" prompted Romer.

"Yes, his answer was: 'I have a child of my own, Bradley; you never had any one else to think of but yourself, and so you don't understand or care for others. I can't stand this thing any longer; I want to withdraw from the company altogether. I regret that I ever allowed money to tempt me at all.'

"Then I hurried back to the kitchen," continued Miss Collett, "because I heard the key turn in the door. To my surprise, Dad came into the kitchen, gulped down two glasses of water, and went back to the study again without saying a word to me. He was very much upset, and I feared a fresh attack of fever that he was subject to.

"I crept up to the study door again, and was just in time to hear Mr. Bradley yell: 'Well, I'll buy out your share, but mind that you keep your mouth shut. You'll get out of town if you know what's good for you! I warn you once more. Watch your step!' Then I retreated hastily, and none too soon, for Bradley rushed out of the study, and I watched him leaving the house."

Burke eyed the silent detective, who was stroking his chin meditatively.

"What do you make of it, Romer?" he asked.

The detective looked at his Chief and smiled.

"Judging from the conversation which Miss Collett overheard, it is a certainty that John Collett was engaged in some shady business with Ray Bradley, and it will be my business to find out what it was."

Burke grinned, and nodded his approval. Miss Collett became excited and leaned toward the detective. "And do you think my suspicions may prove correct?" she asked.

"Yes, I do," answered Romer with finality, "and I'll show you why. Let us see the process of elimination. In the first place, your father wanted to sever his affiliation with Ray Bradley & Company because of you. His motive was to look out for your welfare, and he certainly could not do that if he committed suicide. He also kept Bradley away from you. Therefore, it would be incompatible with your father's actions to believe for one minute that he had deliberately destroyed himself before he was clear of Bradley, thereby forcing you to have dealings with the man. How? You would have to take care of the interest in the business which you would inherit. The natural conclusion is that your father did not commit suicide."

"Dad would never willingly have left me alone to face that rascal, Bradley," murmured Miss Collett.

"Now, let us go on to the second point," continued Romer. "I saw, by this morning's news that neither the local police nor the Federal authorities can trace the morphine to the place in which it was bought. That would mean that your father either did not purchase it himself, or that he got it through the agency of a drug dealer."

"Drug dealer!" gasped Miss Collett. "My father never took anything but quinine. I myself had purchased a little vial of quinine for him on our doctor's prescription. And only the morning of the day of his death he asked me to give him but half the dose, saying that he would take the other half later."

"Where were you in the habit of keeping this vial of quinine?" questioned the detective.

"Dad always insisted upon its being kept on his desk in the study," replied the girl. "He hated to waste time searching for it in the medicine chest."

"Then it was lying on his desk all day, and in the evening, when Bradley called?"

"Yes, and I think Mr. Bradley had an excellent chance to tamper with it while Dad came into the kitchen to get that drink of water."

"Has the vial been examined for fingerprints, Miss Collett?" put in Burke.

"Yes, but Captain Detmar of the police said that none were found outside of Dad's and mine. The Captain questioned me suspiciously, but finally decided that I had nothing to do with Dad's death."

"Wasn't your father able to make a statement before he died?" asked Romer.

Miss Collett shook her head in the negative.

"It was only about a half-hour after Bradley left that I was attracted to the study by hearing my father's groans. I found him on the floor, the vial in his hand. My first thought was that he must have taken an overdose of quinine. I asked him how much he had taken, and he was barely able to say 'two grains.' Our doctor, whom I called, tried very hard to get him to speak, but it was of no use. He died within an hour."

The detective remained silent for a time, then:

"Did the analysis show the contents of the vial to be morphine?"

"Yes, it was morphine—powdered morphine."

"Ah, then it wasn't crystalline?"

"No, it was powdered," declared Miss Collett emphatically.

"That clinches our first point!" exclaimed Romer enthusiastically. "Why should a man committing suicide be particular whether the morphine is crystalline or powdered? Why should he take the trouble to place it in his quinine vial; and where is the quinine that previously was in the vial?"

Miss Collett looked bewildered.

"I thought of that last question, too," she murmured. "Although Captain Detmar and Inspector Lardon, of the narcotic division of the Internal Revenue department, made a thorough search of the place, no quinine was found anywhere."

Detective Romer leaned back in his chair and smiled with satisfaction.

"Our last point is: Who brought the morphine into the study? If your father, and it certainly seems improbable in the face of point one, where did he get it? If it was Bradley—and he's the only one other person we can suspect, since he was your father's only visitor—where did he get it? These are the unknown factors, Miss Collett, which I must bring into the realm of the known. Oh, by the way, have you any servants?"

"Yes, two females, a cook and a maid. But as I always took charge of Dad's study, they rarely ever entered that room alone, and I am quite sure that neither of them had on the day Dad died."

"One other question, Miss Collett, and then I want you to go straight home and forget all about your troubles," said Romer kindly, noting the girl's drooping attitude. "How was Bradley dressed the evening he quarreled with your father?"

The girl thought for a moment, then:

"Why, he wore a dark blue suit, brown overcoat, hat and shoes, and brown gloves."

"Thank you," smiled the detective. "That will be all for this evening, Miss Collett. I'll be at your home in the morning, say about eight o'clock, and look over the study. I have no hopes of finding anything more tangible than Captain Detmar and Inspector Lardon have found; they are very careful searchers. Still, there are possibilities, and so I, too, will conduct a search."

After Romer had seen Miss Collett to the door, he came back to Chief Burke's desk and, leaning over, smiled into the elder man's eyes.

"Thanks for giving me this chance, Chief," he said gratefully.

Burke's face became serious. "It's a big case, Mason," he replied sternly, "bigger than I at first thought it would be. Heretofore you've worked only under the direction of well-seasoned detectives of my staff. This time you will work alone. It is your first big job and the handling of it and the results will prove to me whether you have made your début as a full-fledged detective or a failure."

Mason threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"I hope it's the former, Chief," he said, holding out his hand. "Wish me good luck!"

Burke rose. "By heavens, I do!" he answered firmly, and clapped his hand into Romer's with such force that the detective was doomed to remember that handshake for some time afterwards.

The next day proved an unpleasant one with its mixture of snow and rain; but not even the weather could damper Detective Romer's spirits as he hastened, sheltered beneath his greatcoat and armed with an umbrella, to Miss Collett's home on the West Boulevard.

And after he had made a careful search of John Collett's study without finding a single clue his spirits still remained the same. He was no barometer. His face was no instrument by which others could determine any probable change in his emotions. One never could tell whether this budding detective was deeply disappointed or highly elated over any discoveries or non-discoveries. He was always the same—calm, matter-of-fact, yet capable of using his imagination, while wearing an enigmatical smile.

Knowing that he would be wasting precious moments by lingering at the Collett home, Romer hastened from there to the offices of Ray Bradley & Co.—situated in the Commercial Building on the main ave-

nue—with only one interruption en route. He had pand a fifteen-minute visit at the toy shop of a friend who conducted his place of business not far from the Bradley & Co. offices.

On entering the Commercial Building, he glanced up at the hall directory, and learned that the company he was seeking would be found on the second floor, corridor C. The detective walked up the one flight of stairs, but just as he was turning into corridor C he stopped short.

A tall, sleek-looking young man, clad in a laboratory apron and bearing a carton in his hand, emerged from a doorway on the left, crossed the corrider and, without knocking, entered a doorway directly opposite on the right.

The next moment Romer stood before the glass-paneled door on the right, the black lettering thereon informing him that this was the home office of Ray Bradley & Co., Manufacturer of Rag Dolls.

Glancing at the opposite door, he read: The Busch Laboratories—Chemists—Karl Busch, Ernst Busch.

From his impassive face one could not tell whether the detective had deduced anything from this incident or not as he stood pondering. However, the flicker of a smile played upon his firm lips as he rapped softly, almost timidly, at the door on the right.

It was opened by a stout, large-headed, bristle-haired man.

"Pardon me, are you Mr. Bradley?" asked the officer, pitching his voice a trifle higher than his natural voice.

"Yes," answered the man gruffly.

"Well, I should like to leave an order for rag dolls," explained the detective.

Bradley's manner changed.

"Come right in," he said more pleasantly.

Romer stepped into the office with an unrhythmical gait that seemed to indicate disordered pedal extremities. The young chemist, who had entered so shortly before, stood in the centre of the room and glared at Romer with evident annoyance.

The detective met his look with an indifferent smile and, going over to a small table that stood in the angle of two walls, placed his hat on top of a carton—which the detective suspected was the one brought in by the chemist—and leaned his umbrella against the table. Then he strode clumsily to Bradley's desk, where the manufacturer had laid out several different sizes of rag dolls.

"Goodness gracious, aren't they the cute jiggers!" exclaimed Romer, taking out a pair of pince-nez that looked like a dissatisfied butterfly when it finally sat upon his nose. Cocking his head at an angle, he grinned foolishly at the rag dolls.

Bradley and the chemist, who was no other than Ernest Busch, glanced at each other. And that glance plainly indicated that they thought the brain hidden in the skull of the prospective buyer must be totally devoid of intelligence.

When Romer had grinned at the dolls long enough, he said:

"I see they are marked at different prices. Can you send me a mixed gross?"

"Surely, surely," answered Bradley, rubbing his chubby hands in a business-like manner. "I'll have my secretary take your order."

A young woman came into the room in answer to Bradley's summons, order pad and pencil in her hand.

"Miss Evans, please put down an order for this gentleman for a mixed gross of dolls," dictated Bradley.

The girl wrote the order, then asked:

"Your name and address, please?"

"E. P. Mark's toy shop on Union Street," answered the officer, putting his eyeglasses into his pocket. "How soon can I have the dolls, Mr. Bradley?"

"It will be a week or more," replied Bradley. "We are very busy just now."

Miss Evans had retreated, and was just entering a door marked "Private Office" when Romer stumbled toward her, calling: "Er—Miss Evans—just one minute. On second thought, I think we can use more dolls. Mark's toy shop is popular. Yes. Er—make it two gross."

While he was drawling out this bit of conversation the detective stood so close to the girl that she could not advance a step that would enable her to close the half-opened door of the private office, which

she seemed very anxious to hide from the detective's view.

Romer, however, had covertly secured a glimpse of the office he had been anxious to get. Making his way toward his hat and umbrella, he observed nonchalantly:

"I suppose you are doing well, sir?"

"Oh, yes," replied Bradley, chuckling with amusement. "We ship thousands of dolls every week."

Romer feigned a look of surprise.

"Is that so!" he exclaimed. "But surely you don't manufacture them here?" By this time he had reached the table and was pulling on his hat.

"My, no!" responded Bradley. "We haven't the facilities in this place. Our manufacturing plant is on Fifteenth Street."

"It must give one a grand feeling to be at the head of a prosperous manufacturing concern," sighed the officer, reaching for his umbrella and lifting it in such a way that one of the rib-tips caught under the cover of the carton on the table. "That's what I always wanted to be, but——"

There was a slight jingle of glass as the cover slid off the carton, exposing several layers of one-ounce vials.

"My goodness, but I get clumsier every day!" exclaimed Romer, hastily replacing the cover. "Please pardon my awkwardness."

"It's all right," replied Bradley, but his voice and expression belied what he said. He was beginning to lose patience with this dawdling customer.

Hooking his umbrella onto his arm, the detective held out his hand to Bradley. "Well, good-day, sir," he said affably. "If the dolls go well, I'll drop in and give you another order."

Bradley shook his hand with a look of relief and hurriedly showed him to the door.

When Romer was gone the chemist roared:

"For heaven's sake, Bradley, what did you bother with that simp for!"

"Oh, what are you excited about, Busch?" sneered Bradley. "He's harmless; a little weak in the upper story."

"I hate these stupid appearing fools; they're not as harmless as they look," snapped Busch. "I'll bet he got a peep into that private office and saw what was in that carton. His actions seemed casual enough, but I'm not so sure that they were as innocent as they appeared to be."

"Well, why don't you trail him, if you think he's a dangerous spy," demanded Bradley, his temper rising.

"Trail him yourself," replied the chemist curtly. "I have something else to do, and you haven't."

"Is that so!" bellowed the now thoroughly enraged manufacturer as Ernest Busch started out of the door. "Well, when I want to waste precious time I'll come to you for suggestions."

When Romer left Bradley & Co.'s offices he made his way briskly to the lower hall. There he halted and examined the palm of his right hand with keen interest. It was coated with a white, powdered substance that adhered through the natural moisture in the palm.

Removing a blank sheet from his memorandum book, he scraped off as much of the substance as he could and folded it within the sheet of paper. At that moment he heard a door slam upstairs and then another. After waiting a few seconds to make sure that no one was coming down to trail him, he hastened way.

Going directly to the chemist who handled all of the Lincoln Detective Agency's analysis work, Romer asked him to analyze the small sample of white powder. When it was done the Chemist's answer was—quinine.

The detective now had a number of loose threads of evidence on hand, thanks to his efforts of the morning, so he went home with the firm determination to tie those threads together.

When Mason Romer greeted Chief Burke next morning, Inspector Lardon of the Federal Narcotic Division came in. The inspector had called to "hold a confab" with Burke, since Miss Collett had informed him the day before that the private detective agency was working on the case in her behalf.

"Why didn't you report last night, Romer?" asked the Chief, when the detective

had seated himself beside his superior's desk.

"I was very busy, Chief," responded the young detective, "busy thinking. I didn't want to waste time writing up a report or even to talk about the case until this morning. I'm ready now, though, if you care to hear about it."

Chief Burke leaned over on his arms and smiled at the young detective.

"Sure I want to hear about it. Inspector Lardon was more than surprised that I entrusted the Collett case to you. He wanted to know if you had reported anything definite yet, and I had to give him the discouraging answer that you had said nothing. Let's hear what you've been doing."

"I am thoroughly convinced," said Romer slowly and deliberately, as though challenging the private thoughts of Inspector Lardon, "that Ray Bradley killed John Collett to cover up the most vicious drug ring in this part of the country."

Both Chief Burke and Inspector Lardon stared in silence. Then Burke leaned back in his chair while a gleam of admiration came into his eyes. Was it possible that this young sleuth, whom, heretofore, the police and Federal authorities heard little about, had unearthed such clues as those other untiring investigators had sought and could not find?

Inspector Lardon leaned forward and exclaimed:

"The facts, man. Give us the facts!"

"I will," replied Romer quietly. "In the first place, I'm quite sure that Ray Bradley is at the head of a dope ring, judging from what I saw in his office yesterday morning."

"At his office?" put in Lardon. "I was at his office yesterday afternoon, but I saw nothing that didn't belong in an office of that kind."

Romer's placid smile appeared.

"Perhaps you didn't see anything, Inspector," he replied, "because Bradley knows who you are. You don't suppose he'd be fool enough to let you see anything that would give him away? Now, with me it was different. He didn't know me, and I went to him playing the rôle of a buyer of rag dolls for my friend E. P. Mark. Bradley most likely thinks I am E. P. Mark himself, because I didn't tell him I was ordering for some one else."

"Does your friend Mark know you suspect Bradley?" asked Chief Burke.

"He surely does, Chief," responded Romer. "And he knows just what to do in case Bradley does become suspicious and shows up at his toy shop. I arranged a plan with Mark before I went to Bradley's."

And then the detective launched into an explanation of how he had arrived at Bradley's office just at the opportune time to see the chemist enter the place with a carton; how he managed to get a peep into the inner office, and of his little ruse with the umbrella that aided him in finding out what the carton contained.

"So a chemist from across the hall brought in a carton of one-ounce vials," repeated Lardon, looking at the younger detective with unconcealed admiration. "That's a darned fine clue."

Chief Burke chuckled to himself. Then he said:

"You told us you got a look into the private office, Mason, but you didn't tell us why you became suspicious of that room and what that peek of yours took in."

Inspector Lardon leaned forward tensely while Romer replied:

"Miss Evans, Bradley's secretary, was wearing dark-brown spats. I noticed that those spats were speckled with sawdust and a few pieces of bright colored thread clung to them. Now, that made me wonder whether Miss Evans was really engaged in secretarial work in that inner room or not! Sawdust and thread did not strike me as being necessary articles for use in that line of work.

"I was also a bit mystified when I saw a small sewing cabinet and a desk bestrewed with rag dolls on which Miss Evans must have been sewing. My mystification immediately departed, however, when I saw the small vials in the carton."

Burke and Lardon gazed at each other blankly and then at Romer. But the detective's face maintained the expression of a sphinx, and he offered no further explanation. He was inwardly amused to see his

Chief and the inspector cudgeling their brains to find the hidden meaning of his words.

After a period of silence, he saw the first signs of comprehension come into Chief Burke's eyes. That worthy gentleman suddenly seized his pencil dagger-like, stabbed it into his desk blotter and, straining forward, exclaimed:

"I get you, Mason!" Then to Lardon: "Don't you see what he is driving at, Inspector? Small vials of dope hidden in rag dolls!"

"Holy mackerel!" exploded Lardon, then he subsided into silence again.

"You've struck it, Chief," said Romer quietly. "Bradley manufactures bona-fide rag dolls at his Fifteenth Street factory, and you couldn't find a count against him there. But a certain number of dolls are sent to the office, and there they are opened by Miss Evans, a one-ounce vial of morphine or some other drug inserted in each, then it is carefully sewed up again.

"These dolls never go to toy shops run by honest people, but to cunning confederates who distribute the dope. The Busch brothers, being chemists, can obtain large supplies of morphine under the pretext of making laboratory experiments. A subtle method of conducting a dope ring, I'll say! There wasn't any hocus-pocus in my finding it, either. I just happened into corridor C. of the Commercial Building at the right moment."

"Well, you did pull off a neat bit of trickery when you got inside of Bradley's office," responded Lardon smilingly. "Now about John Collett. You said a while ago that you are convinced Bradley killed him. You are not a young man given to idle conviction. Let's have the evidence."

"Bradley was with John Collett shortly before he died," answered Romer, "and they quarreled. During the visit, Collett left Bradley alone in the study while he went to the kitchen for a drink of water. His usual supply of quinine laid on his desk. During Collett's absence it was an easy matter for Bradley to hastily pour the quinine into his pocket and substitute powdered morphine, wasn't it?"

"A plausible theory," put in the inspector, "but where's your proof? What makes you think he poured the quinine into his pocket?"

"Miss Collett informed us," replied the detective, "that Bradley wore a dark-blue suit the evening he visited her father. I noticed that he was wearing a suit of similar color yesterday which I thought the same one he wore that evening. For the better part of the time that I remained in his office Bradley had kept his hands in his coat pockets. On making my departure I shook hands with him. Then, as I was going downstairs, I found that the palm of my right hand was slightly covered with a white powdered substance. This I carefully scraped off and had it analyzed."

"What was it?" asked Chief Burke quickly.

"Quinine!"

"Huh!" grunted Lardon, stroking his chin thoughtfully. "That looks suspicious. Yet there weren't any of Bradley's fingerprints on the vial found in Collett's study."

"Bradley wouldn't be stupid enough to leave fingerprints, Inspector," replied the detective. "According to Miss Collett's statement, he was wearing gloves when he left the house and he most likely had them on when he handled the vial. But he was just stupid enough to forget to empty his pocket of the quinine; or, if he did empty it, neglected to brush it out thoroughly."

Chief Burke nodded and looked satisfied.

"What is your next move?" he asked.

"A raid, this afternoon, of both Bradley's offices and the Busch Laboratories. What do you say, Inspector?"

Lardon jumped to his feet like a jack-in-the-box and, taking up his hat, answered heartily:

"Sure! I'll run right down to Headquarters, fix it up with Captain Detmar, and get a search warrant. Will you hold yourself ready to accompany us?"

"Certainly," answered the detective smilingly. "I'll lunch here with the Chief instead of going home, so you'll know just where to get me."

That afternoon the raid took place. Five

gross of rag dolls were seized that were being loaded on the company's truck just as the raiders arrived at the Commercial Building. A patrolman ripped open a number of the dolls with his penknife, and in each one an ounce bottle of morphine was concealed. The result of the invasion of Bradley's offices and the Busch Laboratories was the confiscation of fifty thousand dollars worth of drugs. Bills for morphine from a well-known wholesale house were found in the laboratories. These bills plainly indicated where the drugs had been obtained under false pretenses. This fact was verified later by the police telephoning the manager of the factory.

The truck driver, Ray Bradley, Miss Evans and Karl and Ernest Busch were taken to headquarters, where Capt. Detmar heard the charges. At Lardon's request all the prisoners, except Bradley, were placed in separate cells and held for arraignment before the United States Commissioner on the charge of illegal dealing in drugs.

Bradley was detained for further grilling on a charge of the murder of John Collett.

When the prisoner heard the accusation he glared at the detective maliciously, then burst into raucous laughter. When this outburst subsided, he yelled:

"Killed him! Why the poor nut killed himself!"

"His own hand administered the poison," admitted Romer, "but he wasn't aware of what he was taking. That little vial that laid on his desk actually contained quinine up to the time that you cunningly poured it into your coat pocket and substituted morphine. No, Bradley, John Collett did not commit suicide! You went to his home and deliberately worked him into a fever by quarreling with him because his conscience would not permit him to have a hand in your nefarious business any longer. You surmised that he would resort to his usual dose of quinine after you had gone, and it was you who put the morphine into that vial. It worked out just as you hoped it would."

"He's crazy," shouted Bradley. But there was a telltale note in the prisoner's voice that sounded as though he was trying to convince himself, instead of others, of the truthfulness of this assertion. And a sudden look of fear came into his eyes. He saw a terrible menace in the person of this young man.

"Where's your proof that I touched that vial at all," he shouted again, this time with less bravado.

"The quinine that was transferred from your palm to the palm of my hand after I shook hands with you yesterday morning is proof that your pocket had held this drug without a container. By the way, you remember my order for E. P. Mark?"

"Yes," growled Bradley. "Ernest Busch was suspicious of you. I was a fool for not taking his warning!"

"His warning came too late," remarked Romer dryly. "Getting back to the main subject, why should a man put such an article as quinine in his pocket unpacketed unless he is in great hurry to dispose of it? And why should he be in a hurry to dispose of it unless he fears detection? You, Bradley, were in both haste and fear when you changed the contents of that vial that laid on Collett's desk when he went to the kitchen for a drink of water. We know that you did it, so you might as well come clean!"

Bradley's face blanched, but a crafty light stole into his eyes.

"And supposing you're wrong," he said hoarsely. "Supposing I accidentally spilled that quinine in——"

"But you *accidentally* didn't," interrupted the detective. "You *deliberately* poured it into your pocket because that was the quickest way to accomplish your fiendish act."

The detective caught and held the prisoner's eyes under the power of his own as he concluded with a deadly meaning that sounded Bradley's doom:

"Stop your sparring, Bradley. We know of one who saw you change——"

A gasp came from the prisoner, a gurgle, then he toppled off his chair onto the floor.

Capt. Detmar telephoned a doctor immediately, and fifteen minutes later they were informed that the prisoner's sudden attack was a bad case of apoplexy.

"It's his left side," pointed out the doc-

tor. "His heart action is very weak. Looks as though he's done for."

Bradley opened his eyes. Consciousness had returned while the doctor was speaking; he had heard himself doomed to death. A sickly grin spread over his pulpy-looking face, and he made a visible effort to talk.

Capt. Detmar leaned over him and listened carefully as the prisoner's words came thick and labored but distinct enough to be understood: "I'll cheat—the law—again. You won't get me—now. I—killed—Collett. The dick—Romer—pretty clever. Collett knew—too much. Afraid—he'd squeal. Tell—Collett's girl—I cleared her father—of suicide—before I checked—out. I liked her—and hated—father—keeping her—from me. I—put morphine—in vial."

Bradley sank into unconsciousness again, and a few minutes later was placed in an ambulance and taken to the hospital under guard.

"Well, that's that!" said Capt. Detmar, rising from his desk after writing down Bradley's confession, word for word. "Lardon, and you, Romer, stood close enough to hear what Bradley said. Is this what you heard?"

Both Lardon and the detective read the written confession and both answered in the affirmative.

"Sign your names as witnesses, then," suggested the captain. "If Bradley lives, he'll have a fine time trying to get away from this. This was your first big job, Romer, and I'm glad to say you've won."

AN INSURANCE PLOT

ALEX KELS, wealthy butcher of Lodi, Cal., confessed to authorities at Eureka, Cal., that he had killed a stranger on his ranch near Lodi, September 12, set fire to a haystack near his automobile to burn the body and disappeared to enable his wife to collect insurance amounting to $100,000.

Announcement of the confession was made by M. G. Woodward, Assistant District Attorney of San Joaquin country, after he and Sheriff A. H. Riecks had questioned Kels for nearly four hours.

Kels told the officers, they said, his action was taken because he was in financial distress. Who the man was that he killed he said he did not know. He picked up the stranger at a Lodi free employment agency, he said, and took him to his ranch, where he shot him. He then put the body in the automobile, heaped hay around the machine, set fire to it and fled.

For nearly three weeks the body has been believed to be that of Kels. It was buried after one of the most elaborate services ever held in San Joaquin county.

Kels told the authorities he had not expected to realize on the insurance money, but to assure his wife of getting it and enabling her to discharge business obligations he had contracted. His wife, an expectant mother, is in a serious condition at her home in Lodi and has not been told Kels is alive and under arrest. He said he had been traveling throughout the Southwest since his disappearance from Lodi.

Kels was prominent in the community around Lodi, and his supposed funeral was attended by 3,000 persons. Soon after this Sheriff Riecks and the District Attorney's office at Stockton began an investigation.

The victim in the burned automobile had only three teeth. Kels was known to have a full set. An analysis of the dead man's stomach showed no traces of the sardines Kels was reported to have eaten a short time before the charred body was found.

Later a former resident of Lodi notified the authorities that he had seen Kels in Reno, Nev., and a man of his description finally was traced to Eureka.

The name of the stranger hired by Kels has not been learned. He was between 50 and 60 years old.

Three Wise Men of Gotham

By EDGAR DANIEL CRAMER

"BOYS," Warden Wehler, his voice kind, his eyes sympathetic, was addressing the three men in prison drab who stood before him with their eyes fixed on the polished office floor, "turn over a new leaf. This has been your first trip up here. Make it your last. If I——"

"We never shoulda made this trip," Dapper snarled, his voice tremulous with emotion, his lanky frame shaking, as he lifted flashing eyes to the warden. "We were framed. We were railroaded up here."

"That's th' straight of it, Warden," Blinky and Cotton croaked, lifting their glances to the grizzled warden's face. "We were goats, that's all."

"I've heard all that many times," Wehler replied patiently. "Just the same, you have done your time and all the talking in the world can't alter that. There is nothing—"

"Nothin' gits us nothin'!" Dapper cut in. "We're just three poor boobs who've finished a stretch fer somethin' we hadn't no more to do with than yourself, Mr. Warden. Huh! Th' cops had to make some kind o' a showin' in th' Union Trust robbery. We were th' goats. They found us with some o' th' swiped bills on us. Planted! So help me! An' then it was us fer th' big house an' th' long grind. There's somebody gonna pay fer this dirty deal, believe me!"

"This is Christmas Eve," Wehler reminded him.

"Huh!" Dapper laughed mirthlessly. "Christmas Eve! What's that meanin' to th' likes o' us?"

"This is no time for hate," the warden went on. "Get it out of your hearts, all of you. This is the season of peace and good will. If you're wise——"

"We're wise, awright," Cotton interrupted.

"Wise? Huh!" Dapper snapped. "We sure are!"

"Christmas Eve," Blinky mumbled, leaning forward to stare at Warden Wehler with nearsighted eyes, "an' peace an' good will."

"You will be home for Christmas, boys," Wehler laughed. "Fix them up, Carson," he directed the guard who was standing with his back to the door. "Good-by and good luck and Merry Christmas." He stepped from behind his desk and shook hands with each man. "Go straight, boys," he finished. "That's the only way."

An hour later the three sallow-faced, shifty-eyed ex-convicts, in ill-fitting, prison-made clothes and stiff, squeaky shoes, were stumbling down the long, twisting road that led from the gray prison to the station at the foot of the hill. Each man was tightly clutching a railroad ticket and a crinkly five-dollar bill between his thumb and forefinger thrust deep into his vest pocket. The frost-hardened roadbed rang sharply under their tread. The arc-lights at rare intervals revealed them as shuffling grotesques plunging from darkness to darkness. A cold wind wailed around them and tugged at their garments as they trudged downward. They hunched low into their upturned coat-collars and pulled their caps down over their eyes.

"Ain't this one heluva night?" Cotton grumbled.

"It's Christmas Eve," Blinky muttered between chattering teeth.

"What's that to us?" Dapper growled. "You been swallowin' Warden Wehler's peace-an'-good-will guff, Blinky? Fergit it!"

Snow began to fall, and, whipped along by the wind, the flying crystals bit into their exposed flesh like fine particles of glass. As they drew near the station their train panted to a stop. They clambered aboard into the smoker, where the warmth and protection were a most welcome relief.

"An' he said if we're wise," Cotton chuckled evilly, as he and Dapper settled into the nearest seat, "we'll be turnin' over a new leaf. It sure is to laugh."

"We're wise," Dapper sneered, as he deftly rolled and lighted a cigarette, "an' that's why we're goin' straight——"

"Straight fer Flash Moran," Cotton muttered, as Blinky turned a seat and settled back facing his companions. "Straight's th' merry word if you're askin' me."

"What's th' lay-out anyway in this little game?" Blinky asked without enthusiasm.

Then to the clickety-clack, clackety-click of the wheels, as they trundled over the rail-joints, with frequent quick and furtive glances around to guard against being overheard, the three leaned their heads close together and buzzed and buzzed like village gossips, while the train carried them farther and farther away from the great, gray, stone pile on the hill, while the snow beat insistently against the windows like ghostly fingers.

"It's more'n three years," Cotton was saying, as the train pulled into the Grand Central. "Flash sure has some payin' to do."

"An' Flash married Molly Doyle?" Blinky was voicing his amazement. "What'd she ever see in that rat?"

"Search me," Dapper answered. "There ain't never no tellin' 'bout th' frails."

"Molly had us all eatin' out o' her hand," Blinky mused.

"There ain't nothin' we wouldn't o' done fer her," Cotton laughed. "We'd all dance to any tune she'd whistle."

"An' she's flopped fer Flash?" Blinky muttered. "What you know 'bout that?"

Somewhat taken aback by the unfamiliar clatter and rush around them, awed by the milling crowd, dazzled by the brightness of the lights, they climbed from the train-level and wormed their way to the street, where the falling snow was like bits of shattered rainbows drifting through the air.

"From up th' river," Boyle, a plainclothes man, told Officer Schultz, as the three paused on the corner to get their bearings. "It's all over them like their skins. You can never go wrong on those birds."

Schultz nodded and shook the snow from his cap as he watched Dapper and Cotton and Blinky disappear down the nearest subway stairs like frightened rabbits.

"They seem in a big hurry," Boyle muttered. "I reckin I'd be wise if I trailed 'em. Something's got that outfit movin' on th' jump. Wonder what they're up to, anyway?"

"They're beatin' it home," Schultz laughed. "Wake up, man. It's Christmas Eve, an' them poor devils are just turned loose. Is it any wonder they're hot-footin' it? Lay off an' have a heart."

"We'll let it go at that," Boyle chuckled, as he turned away to mingle with the throng, that jostled good-naturedly along the pavements and in many places spilled out into the streets.

However, both Schultz and Boyle would have received a decided shock had they seen Blinky and Cotton and Dapper two hours later—eleven-thirty, to be exact. They had paused on the topmost landing of a shadowy tenement stairs. From the darkness around them and below them there came muffled voices, soft footfalls, the whining of children in their sleep, all interspersed with an abundance of curses and snores.

"Heaven can't be far from here," Cotton whispered, breathless from their long climb. "Flash won't be havin' far to go, anyway."

"Flash ain't goin' that way," Blinky sighed.

"Straight ahead, you guys," Dapper ordered. "We ain't got no time to lose in silly gabbin'. Th' last door on th' left."

"All set?" Cotton queried.

"No loud talk," Blinky reminded his companions. "Don't be losin' your heads, you dumb-bells. We ain't wantin' this house down on us like a lot o' buzzin' bees."

They tiptoed forward into the inky blackness. They soon found the door they were seeking and Cotton beat a tattoo on its

panels with his knuckles. Scarcely breathing, they leaned forward expectantly.

"Come in," a weak voice sounded in their ears.

"Flash himself!" Dapper exulted, as he opened the door.

"Flash!" Blinky and Cotton echoed, trailing Dapper into the room.

Momentarily blinded by the light from a kerosene-lamp on a bare, rickety table, they stood just inside the door blinking around. Gradually they made out the wretched place in which they found themselves, its ugly gauntness charitably softened by the shadows. The snow was monotonously beating against the room's one window. By the table a hollow-eyed, thin-featured man was resting in a flimsy rocker, that creaked miserably to his infrequent movements. He appeared shriveled, old, a young man prematurely aged. As he stared at his visitors a nameless fear grew in his eyes. Behind him in the shadows they could just make out a tumbled bed.

"Hello, Flash!" Dapper sneered. "We've come to collect."

"What you drivin' at, Dapper?" Flash whimpered. "What you aimin' to collect from me?"

"Listen to him, you guys!" Dapper mimicked. "What am I drivin' at? Huh!"

"What you guys want?" Flash asked weakly.

"What we want," Blinky spoke slowly, "is jus' to pay our regards. There's a little account between us that we're gonna settle. We've been payin' fer more'n three years an' now it's your time to come across."

"What's th' big idea?" Flash quavered.

"Jus' this," Cotton explained. "We been doin' some hard thinkin' up th' river. Dapper an' Blinky an' me have been puttin' two an' two together an' makin' 'em total up four every time. "We——"

"What's all this two-by-four stuff got to do with me?" Flash demanded tremulously.

"No matter how we figgered things," Cotton went on, "they always come out th' same. You were a sneakin' stool-pigeon, Flash, an' you sold us out to th' bulls. We never did you no dirt, but jus' th' same, by some hook or crook, you planted them bills on us that sent us up th' river fer a stretch —see? We're wise, Flash, to your sellin' us out, an' tonight—well!"

"I'm waitin'!" Flash submitted to what he deemed the inevitable with a forced show of bravado. "When do th' Christmas festivities git under way?"

Three gleaming knives flashed in the yellow light. Flash Moran's three dupes inched toward him, as he cringed in his chair with horror-wide eyes. He tried to scream, but his efforts ended only in a choking gasp.

"Don't!" A woman's wild cry lifted from the tumbled bed. "It's murder you're doin', an' this is Christmas Eve!"

"It's Molly!" the three breathed as one man, letting their knives slowly fall to their sides.

"You couldn't! You wouldn't!" she protested. "Flash ain't got no chance."

"We didn't have no chance!" Dapper snorted. "Th' money Flash planted on us wasn't warm 'fore th' bulls nabbed us. We didn't even know it was there."

"I ain't knowin' whether Flash sold you boys out," Molly went on.

"He did, awright," Cotton insisted.

"Even if he did," she retorted, "you wouldn't be knifin' a helpless man. He's been paralyzed from his waist down fer more'n two months now. He's nearly paid enough, I'm thinkin'. Cotton, you couldn't square things now. Dapper, you couldn't kill a man who's weaker'n a baby. Blinky, you've got too much heart fer such butchery. Even if you go through with this," she spoke with more and more of an effort, "you wouldn't be croakin' th' Flash Moran you knew, th' Flash you claim sold you to th' bulls. Th' Flash Moran you used to know is dead. That's a new Flash, helpless in th' chair there. an'——"

She tried to rise, but fell back exhausted upon the rumpled pillows. To the ears of the disconcerted avengers there came the feeble wailing of an infant. They started and stared from each other to Flash and then back to the woman in the shadows. Drawn irresistibly, they sidled near to the bed.

"Th' baby was born 'round noon," Molly

explained proudly, her eyes on the child at her breast, her face like a pale lily in the dark cloud of her hair. "Flash ain't able to do nothin'; there ain't even a thing to eat here; to-morrow's Christmas, an' yet you three come breakin' in with murder in your hearts!"

Flash covered his face with his trembling hands. Awkwardly Blinky and Cotton and Dapper turned from Molly, completely absorbed in her baby, circled the rickety table and went out noiselessly, closing the door carefully behind them.

As they emerged into the street the church-bells of the towering city began to fill the night with their tidings of great joy.

"Merry Christmas, pards!" Blinky exclaimed, and some of the music of the bells seemed to have gotten into his voice. "There ain't no goin' against Molly."

"Huh!" Dapper grunted. "Merry Christmas? An' me with less'n a dollar in my jeans."

"Jus' around th' corner," Cotton laughed, and strangely there was an unaccustomed warmth in his mirth, "there used to be a place where a flop set you back th' sum total o' fifteen cents. Merry Christmas, say I."

"Merry Christmas!" Dapper grinned sourly. "Ain't this been one heluva fizzle? Ain't it?"

But what Blinky and Cotton answered was lost upon the wind, as the three wise men went wandering away into the snow-filled night, while behind them, in the wretched tenement room, a starry-eyed woman lay harkening to the bells and a startled-eyed man sat staring at the three crumpled five-dollar bills that lay on the table under the light.

LIFERS IN PRISON MUTINY

THREE convict murderers were cornered in the dining room of the Eddyville State Penitentiary plant recently, after they had killed one guard and wounded three others, two perhaps fatally, in a desperate attempt to shoot their way to liberty.

Surrounded by a circle of prison guards who were reinformed by scores of citizen riflemen, the convicts held to their barricade, exchanging an occasional shot with the besiegers.

No concerted attempt to rush the improvised fortress of the convicts was made during the day and night. With a machine gun troop of the National Guard from Hopkinsville, and the Tear Gas Squad from the Louisville police department coming to help prison authorities meet the situation, officials expected to determine what course to pursue after a conference with leaders of the reinforcements.

The convicts, armed with automatic revolvers, engaged in battle with prison attaches soon after breakfast and then barricaded themselves in the dining room. One of the mutineers was Monte Walters.

The injured guards are V. B. Mattingly and William Gilbert of Breckinridge county and William Gillihan of Lyon county.

Mattingly, whose wounds are believed to be mortal, fell near the door of the dining room just out of reach of the convicts' bullets, but guards were powerless to rescue him because it would take them in the path of the prisoners' fire. At noon another convict volunteered to carry the stricken man water and besought him to let him carry him to safety, but Mattingly refused. No attempt was made to molest the convict who took the water.

How the convicts procured the guns and ammunition is unknown. It is said Walters' wife visited him a short time ago and it is thought that she may have given them the weapons. She was arrested with Walters when he was convicted of killing Alex Ehrler, a dairyman. Walters refused to implicate his wife in the murder and she was released. Mrs. Walters was reported to have been seen on the streets of Paducah, Ky., but the police there did not make any effort to detain or question her.

The remaining convicts are quiet and the prison is proceeding under the usual routine.

Decoy Ducks

By GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

TWO PRISONERS FOR ONE

"YOU?" Gerda whispered, her face whitening, the proof that she wore no color but her own. "You? Why, it's impossible—impossible!"

"What is impossible?" Laurie inquired, blandly, the while he led her to a more secluded spot. Up an outer companion-way to the topmost deck, and up forward to the rail that overlooked that deck they had just left, he led her unresistingly.

"It is impossible that you are one of the Russian Brotherhood, as you just claimed," she whispered. The last detail the man with the red tie had confided in her had been:

"In case any member of the 'Brotherhood' has any secret to entrust to you, he will first ask you if you are waiting for a message. He will not wait for your answer, but will give you one of the following passwords: If it is Monday, it will be the English motto: 'Virtue alone is invincible.' If it is Tuesday, the motto will be in Russian." And he had written out the difficult consonantal Slavic phrases. "You had best memorize this," he had advised. "Wednesday's motto will be in Turkish. Thursday's motto you can doubtless remember—the Latinized form. Do you know it?"

Being a college graduate, she had answered instantly: "*'Sola virtus invicta'*" and he had nodded. "That is Thursday's," he confirmed, and he went on to the other days.

And here it was Thursday, and one of the Brotherhood was addressing her with the password for that day and the all-important signature:

"All 'messages' will be signed with the key-word of the Brotherhood, the Russian 'Nitchevo'—which has as many meanings," the man in the red tie had smiled. And Mr. Andrew Laurie had given "Nitchevo" that same queer foreign pronunciation, one she could not even attempt.

"Why, why, of course it's impossible," she half-laughed, half-wept. "You, the only man Kemp trusts, the only one aboard who has even seen his face—you to be one of the 'Brotherhood' is simply ridiculous."

"Why not say *'one of us?'*" he inquired gravely. "Why not give me my rightful appellation of 'Brother'?"

His manner had undergone a change; there was something inexplicably foreign about it.

"I don't say *'one of us'* because I'm *not* one of you," she answered, just a little excitedly. He quieted her with upraised hand.

"Speak lower, if you please, dear lady, and more quickly. Let me know what it is you have come to tell me——"

"But I came to tell you nothing," she answered in surprise. "I knew nothing of you when I came aboard. No, nor the people who sent me. Why, I wonder," she added, struck by a new aspect of the situation, "did they want me to do the work you have already done—or could have done? I don't understand."

She looked at him, suspicion kindling in her eyes. This, thought Laurie, would never do. He explained easily—he could explain anything easily and with an air of genuineness quite remarkable when one remembers that most of his explanations were invented on the spur of the moment:

"It is as I thought. No one was aware of my presence on board. Not even among the 'Brotherhood.' The important thing was to get aboard the boat and into communication with Kemp. And as I had stolen another man's name and identity to do so, I dared take no unnecessary chances."

He paused, then flew to the topmost heights of mendacity:

"No, I dared take no chances when my brother's life hung in the balance. Why, why, what is wrong, dear lady?"

For Gerda had taken a step or two back, then a step or two forward. She was tottering when he caught her shoulder, supporting her.

"So like my case," she almost sobbed. "Do you think I would do such a thing as this, wearing the uniform I do, if my motive wasn't a strong one? No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't——"

He was puzzled. But, withal, his manner was so kindly that she forgot he was one of that coldly calculating crew who talked in terms of human lives as unfeelingly as though they were sportsmen speaking of the day's bag of birds.

"You say—your brother——" she began.

"I'll explain. As you know, Kemp, the great spy, is to proceed to Washington. There he will identify as a Brotherhood leader a certain prisoner who is being held, although against all ethics of international law. For the Russian came here as the representative of a duly recognized government, that of the Moscow Soviet. He came," stated Mr. Laurie, pathetically, working himself up to a pitch of emotion over this brother business, "trusting to the belief that his papers protected him. And the American Government holds him on suspicion of having committed what they are pleased to term 'outrages.' But the American Government has decreed that what my brother did, when he fell upon a party of Americans from ambush and slew the lot of them—as they well deserved to be—was an outrage. And they have been holding him in Washington for months awaiting positive identification. Now it so happened that I was in the Hawaiian Islands on other work when I heard that this Kemp had escaped his proper due and was on his way to America. And I knew, knew well," he added, darkly, "that he would never reach Washington to send my brother to life-long imprisonment—or to death."

"Oh, I can sympathize with you," she said, impulsively. "I understand how you feel. Am I not in exactly the same position? That was what I was trying to tell you. But what you said of your brother made me think of mine, and I was—overcome. And unless I turn this Kemp over to your people in San Francisco my brother will be shot as a spy."

The sympathy she had shown him was returned. This time, however, it was not acting. In face of her genuine emotion he felt a little ashamed of his own histrionics.

"Can you tell me—quickly—just how matters stand in your case?" he asked, quietly. He had looked at his watch as he spoke and glanced in the direction Marmaduke, the reporter, had taken, so she knew he was thinking of Kemp. He verified this by adding: "I had my own plans for turning Kemp over to the Brotherhood here. I might have made an end of him on shipboard. But I am not a murderer, either by choice or by office. And I had certain plans for holding him as a hostage. That was why I hoped there would be some one of the Brotherhood here."

"But how can you?" she asked, despairingly. "I have just heard more about how carefully guarded this Kemp is to be. The Brotherhood members knew how difficult it would be even to approach him, else they would not have made this bargain with me. And now I find it even more difficult than *I* had bargained for."

Laurie seemed to be meditating. Any one watching him would have seen his face had brightened a second or so before. Any one who knew him would have known that more than his face had brightened—that some one of his brilliant *coups* was in the process of creation.

"After all, why not?" she heard him say almost inaudibly. Followed a long silence, then, quite suddenly, he said: "I'll do it! Look here, dear lady," he added, impulsive-

ly, "I have every reason to sympathize with you. And I am not anxious for personal laurels. What does it matter to me who delivers Kemp over so long as he *is* delivered? Once he is in the hands of the Brotherhood *my* brother will be safe. And so will *yours*, will he not? But if I delivered him myself, only *my* brother would be saved. Now why should I be selfish? Why shouldn't I not share this reward with you? Or, rather, no, not share it; for if the Brotherhood knew it was I who was handing him over to you, you would not get the *credit;* it is simply *I* who would be *dis*credited."

She could hardly speak for her emotion.

"You would do this—for me," she gasped.

"Yes," he assented. "You and I must meet a little later in the day and discuss the modulating of my plans to the present emergency. Meanwhile, you will acquaint your employers of 'The Brotherhood' that you have perfected plans of your own by which you can guarantee to hand Kemp over to them tonight. Tell them you are absolutely certain of what you say, and that if they doubt you they may come to the St. Francis, where they will see you as one of the guests of the dinner given to Kemp by the notables of the Presidio."

"If they could get that near to him," she laughed, "they would never have employed me, so I was coolly informed. But the St. Francis and its neighborhood is one of the dead-lines over which they dare not pass."

"Tell me, where am I to meet you?" he asked.

She gave him the address of her Bush Street apartment, meanwhile glancing quickly down to see who had been added to the number of those officers she had seen go in the ship's cabin.

"Now, listen," Laurie broke in before she could pick Kemp out. "I will be there within the next two hours. Meanwhile, give no hint to any one of my existence. *Not to any one!* Remember, if those of the Brotherhood knew it was I, not you, who had, to all intents and purposes, captured Kemp, your brother would not go free. Never forget that!"

"I am not libely to. But"—she had caught sight of Marmaduke amid the little knot of newspaper men who had followed the Kemp party—"what am I to tell the journalist?"

"He supposes you to be on official business, doesn't he? See, he is looking for me, and possibly you. Wave to him. I will lift my hat. Now the officers with Kemp have seen me, too, and I must go. But about the reporter; as he thinks you are officially investigating, or assisting in surveillance, he will know you have more knowledge of me now than you had when he spoke of me. And he will probably take your word. So tell him that I am a high official in the Secret Service."

He had lifted his hat and was about to leave her. But she accompanied him.

"Why not present me to Kemp now?" she begged, and he considered this a moment, then nodded. "And what am I to say to the reporter about the other Mr. Laurie?"

"Let the reporter build whatever grisly horror he wishes," said Laurie. "Now we shall be perceived and every move watched after we descend. Let us talk on indifferent topics."

Arm in arm, to the agonizing mystification of the morose Marmaduke, they strolled up to the waiting group of officers, of whom Kemp was easily the least patient. He instantly addressed Laurie:

"Do you realize we have been waiting here for you in plain sight of the Lord only knows how many sharpshooters, every one anxious to take a pot-shot at me?" Kemp demanded with a certain nervous peevishness that sat very ill upon him.

The ancient General Luders was beaming upon Kemp as an artist might beam upon his masterpiece.

"Come, come, Captain," Colonel Courtright rallied him, "we wanted you to say a few words to these newspaper men——"

"No, sir," Kemp interrupted instantly. "With all respect to you, sir, I cannot do it. I don't know where I *would* be if I snarled myself up with reporters' interviews. I'm downright afraid of them, Colonel. May I ask, sir, that we go?"

"Let me first present Miss Grahame——"

"Captain Grahame," the elderly colonel corrected with a laugh.

"Right! Captain Kemp, meet Captain Grahame. The hero of this imbroglio, Captain Grahame."

It was with a different expression that Kemp viewed Gerda, one that Laurie suddenly found himself resenting. Gerda, too, for, with a smile to Laurie, she bowed to Kemp, saluted the others, and took her departure abruptly. One glance at the famous Kemp had relieved her of a good many of the Judas pangs she had been feeling.

"It wouldn't be so terrible, betraying a man like that for one like Dick," she told herself. "I can't help what Kemp *did*, he's just impossible; simply impossible. He may be a good spy, but he can't be worth much as anything else. Pah! what a fishy eye he has! And the creature was actually admiring me! Oh, this won't be as bad as I thought, especially if what this Mr. Laurie promises is actually true. In that case I'm not betraying him at all—this Kemp is already betrayed. Oh, Dick, Dick, you are going to go free, you are going to go free."

But aloud all she said was: "I will see you, then, as soon as you are disengaged, Mr. Laurie."

Lifting his hat, he escorted her to the gangway.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MAN WITH THE RED TIE WRITES A CODE CABLEGRAM

LATER on Oliver Kemp, his forehead bathed in perspiration, looked discontentedly about the reception-room of his suite at The Mayfair Chambers. Just why he should have been discontented was not perceptible to the ordinary eye. The Mayfair was the smartest of the smart, the last word in sumptuous private hotels. And, incidentally, the windows of Captain Oliver Kemp's suite were almost precisely opposite those of Captain Gerda Grahame.

Had Kemp been aware of this he might have been better satisfied, for he had taken an instant fancy for Miss Grahame at first sight of her. But it is doubtful if, at that time, he could have been solaced by anything.

He was too infernally frightened.

"Why was I brought here?" Kemp demanded, ignoring the obvious elegance of the marquetry floors, the inlaid rosewood furniture, the tapestry trimming of which matched the draperies at doors and windows. What he wanted was seclusion; the more seclusion the better.

This desire had been growing upon him ever since he first came from aboard the *Siberia* that morning. By mid-afternoon it had become a sort of mania. Then Laurie strolled in and Kemp almost shouted at him:

"I'm sick and tired of this farce and I'm going to quit!"

"Do you realize what would happen to *you* if you don't do as I tell you?" Laurie retorted. "You don't? Well, I've a copy of the Army 'Rules and Regulations for the Use of Officers.' Here it is. I had it all ready in case you began any nonsense of this sort, my friend. Just read under that heading: 'Penalty for Desertion (i)' That's not what you want, no! You want the bad one: 'Penalty for Desertion (3), on active service, or under fire.' Read it, little one, read it, and then see whether or not you'll be tempted to tell *anybody anything* about our exchange of identities?"

"Wouldn't it be worse for you," muttered Kemp, "if I give this farce away?"

"Worse? After all I've done? Not by a blamed sight. I should probably get a nominal reprimand, that's about all. Think it over for a moment, and you'll see yourself. They had no reason to expect anything of *me! Yet see what I've done!* But you, of whom they had the right to expect everything, you've done nothing but skulk. Skulk; yes, skulk! They've every reason in the world to be grateful to *me!* Worse for me than for you, eh? You must be mad to think so for a single minute. And, see here, young man——"

Laurie shot a long slender finger in his direction much as an old-time Westerner might "throw a gun" on his opponent.

"I've been sticking by you to help you out. Let me hear any more talk like that and I'll quit you the very minute I hear it.

Who cares anything about 'Andrew Laurie'? He can walk in and out of this town whenever he pleases, without anybody to say him 'Yea' or 'Nay.' Yes, and without any guard over him, either. If I did the right thing I'd pull stakes for Washington right this minute——"

In almost a frenzy of fear, Kemp did everything but throw himself at the other's feet.

"No, you wouldn't do that, Willie; you wouldn't do that——"

"Willie? Willie! *Willie!* How many times——"

"I forgot, Bill, I forgot. I was thinking of the days when we were kids, and——"

"Don't be sloppy," urged Mr. Laurie disgustedly.

"Well, you wouldn't desert me when you think of our kid days together, would you? You know it's not my fault if I'm what I am, being brought up by women the way I was, and——"

Laurie turned his back on him, growling:

"Oh, Lord, man, have a little backbone, won't you? Don't be blaming the women for what you are. But I'm not going to desert if you behave yourself—not until you've been started safely back to that oblivion from which you emerged, unhappily for yourself, two years ago. By all rights, you ought to be singing for joy. Think of the figure you'll cut when you've left Washington and can strut around your native village——"

"Merino is a *town* of twenty thousand," corrected Kemp, much offended.

"Well, you'll be back there pretty soon with a uniform and medals, and your name in big headlines. Now haven't you got good cause to be grateful to me for doing all that for you? And there's that girl who wouldn't look at you because you dodged volunteering, and evaded the draft, and everything else. Look at her——"

"If I'm shot and killed, or wounded, or anything, it will be her fault," averred Captain Kemp bitterly. "And my mother will never forgive her, never. My mother knows that if it hadn't been for Rosetta I would never have thrown myself away like I did, going into the Army."

Laurie, although pained by this exhibition of lack of manhood, was nevertheless well-pleased enough in getting Kemp's mind off the reason for his change of base. He had small desire, had Laurie, to explain just why this had happened. The reason, however, was not far to seek. One might have observed it peeping from a window of the apartment house opposite. And the change had occurred since Gerda's second meeting with Laurie, a brief and hasty interview in that same house, during which he had noticed the subdued elegance of the equipages that drew up and drove away from Mayfair Chambers opposite.

"I've come," said Laurie," to arrange a trap for Kemp by luring him into your hands. At nine tonight I hope to lead him through the cellar, ostensibly to escape the men of our organization. You can arrange to have some of the Brotherhood on hand to intercept him. I will act the part of a decoy duck, but you must do the rest. He lives in the Mayfair."

"Yes, it's called the Mayfair, the famous Mayfair infested by the millionaires," Gerda told Laurie. "It belongs to the same management as this place I live in, only this is for the very ordinary gentlefolk."

"Both houses under the same management, you say?" One of those flashes of sheer genius had illumined Laurie's mind. "Pardon me, my dear young lady"—for he was in character again—"I'll leave you for a moment to consult with that same management."

As a matter of fact he did nothing of the sort. The apartment house was provided with one of those electric elevators which require no attendant. One has but to press the button marked with the number of the floor desired and the lift rises or falls to that floor, the gates fly open and one steps out.

Laurie had pressed the button for descent to the uttermost limit, and arrived at the basement floor. Still he had not gone low enough to suit him, but must descend another flight of stairs until he stood in the cellar. It was a vast affair with huge pipes and networks of wires stretching in every direction, the wires more like great insulated

cables, the pipes branching off half a dozen at a time, like the thick branches of a gaint tree.

But nowhere could he see any sign of a furnace, although, by all rights, it should have been on that level. And, moreover, the atmosphere was uncomfortably warm.

He began following the same direction taken by the thickest of the cables, the pipe of the largest circumference. This took him past bins of coal and of wood, other locked bins which might contain bottled goods generally—in short, past bins of every sort and description.

But still no furnace. Yet, indubitably, Gerda Grahame's house was heated either by hot air or by steam. So he went on, making several false turns and being brought up by locked doors, until finally the heat grew intense, and he found himself approaching an iron-railed gallery, which, when reached, looked down on the biggest house-furnace he had ever seen.

Having found it, he pressed on until he found a pair of stairs, ascended them; found, in good time, a "service lift," used it, and, having gone on up to the third floor, left it to take another of the guest variety, which disgorged him in the main lobby of the Mayfair Chambers.

Being under the same management, and occupying precisely the same space on either side of the street, the two big apartment houses, Kensington and Mayfair, were heated by the same giant furnace, just as their electricity came from the same dynamos; both furnace and dynamos being located in the major house, the Mayfair, and connected with the minor one, the Kensington, by the great pipes for heat, the great cables for light and so forth. Laurie left the building and went to see Colonel Courtright.

By Laurie's one flash of intuition the plans of three different conspirators were made easy—those of Laurie himself, those of Gerda, and, finally, those of the man with the red tie and his companions.

For it was to him that Gerda had made her way with happy fleetness the while Laurie was arranging affairs with Colonel Courtright at the Presidio, much to that worthy gentleman's amazement and indignation.

The man with the red tie met Gerda, by appointment over the telephone, in a closed car. While they were driving through Golden Gate Park the Russian was saying to Gerda, not without a certain admiration:

"How on earth have you managed to get him to come to your apartment on the very first night of the first day you met him?"

It made her a little sick to say it, but she kept her eyes steady:

"A girl will do a good many things to save her brother's life, particularly a brother she loves dearly. And you know something of men. Look at me! I have some reasons for believing that I am attractive to men, have I not?"

"Many reasons."

"Then, if I permit a man I have just met to make an appointment to come to my apartment after the theatre, and supper to follow, say, at midnight, who appears to be doing the favor? He or I?"

"It is you, *undoubtedly,* who appear to be, madam."

"Very well, then. If proof of my attraction for him is wanted, what then is better than this? You know where it was intended he should stop during his stay here, do you not?"

"The Presidio, naturally."

"Naturally or not, he does not stop there. Not since this afternoon."

An exclamation of surprise escaped the man with the red tie. She answered the question that would have followed, that was at that moment trembling on his lips, before he had time to ask it.

"He is at The Mayfair, precisely opposite the Kensington; his windows, one might say, look into mine."

"My dear friend," exclaimed the man with the red tie, enraptured, "what would we not give for a permanent alliance with such a woman as yourself!"

"Suppose I can assure you at this moment that I will be able to hand him over to you tonight? How do I know when I have done my share that you will do yours?"

The man with the red tie spread his hands.

"You must trust us—to that extent."

"But I do not wish to trust you—to that or to any extent. I must be positively assured that, at the same moment I put this prisoner in your hands, my brother will be set free. I have worked out a method by which this can be done. Will you agree to it?"

He nodded, but non-committally as she noticed.

"I am serious about this," she cried, with sudden fierceness. "Look, you! Do you think I'm going to hand over to you a man of my own race——"

"An American?" he sneered.

"An American of the same blood as mine. Don't try to make the thing look any the less dirty than it is—yes, *dirty!*" She twisted her clenched hands in a despairing sort of gesture. "One of my own race, and one of my country's Allies. Do you think"—with another burst of ferocity—"that this is easy for me to do while I wear the uniform? And do you think I will wear it for a single day after I do it? No! My resignation goes to the War Office tonight."

He shrugged his shoulders as if to say she must please herself about that.

"And, so, as I started to say, if you think I'm going to hand over one of my race, one of our Allies, unless I am *sure before* I do it that my brother goes free, scot-free, *beforehand*, you are infinitely mistaken and all our business ends right here."

"What are your demands?" he inquired suavely.

"You are holding my brother at Newchwang, you tell me. You brought him there—had him brought there, cabled to whoever had charge of him, to bring him there—so that would be a convenient place to release him. Has he arrived there?"

The Russian took out a wallet containing folded bank-notes and papers. One of the latter bore that day's date and was a cablegram; one of the sort that purports to be an innocent message relating to the receiver's, and sender's, domestic affairs.

It had been sent from Moukden, Manchuria, and had been relayed via Port Arthur to Shanghai and San Francisco. This message had been translated into the following penciled annotation:

"Korloff says he left Harbin some seventy hours before he reached Moukden; after explaining reasons for delay, he states further that this message is being dispatched just as the train leaves for Newchang, bearing him and his prisoner."

The man with the red tie showed her this note, explaining:

"You see the various times mentioned; time sent, first and second relay times, and final hour received. Allowing for Manchurian train time and difference in time there and here, this message means that your brother has been in Newchang for the past few hours."

She clasped her hands in an involuntary gesture of relief.

"Then," said she, "wire your man instantly that he shall leave Newchang, cross the Liao-ho, and take the train for Shan-hai-kuan. That will mean that, by the time I have handed Kemp over to you, my brother will be within a few miles of the Great Wall. Wire your man that my brother is to be a free man when the train pulls into Shan-hai-kuan——"

"He would be a free man then whether we willed it or not," objected the man with the red tie. "Shan-hai-kuan is neutral ground—sanctuary. Seven flags fly over its garrison-house."

"Just so," she agreed. "But if I should fail to carry out my promise, you will yet have time to send a special rush cablegram which will be delivered to your man on the train while it is still on the Russian side of the Manchurian border. Look at this memorandum; you will see that, figuring on Kemp not being in your hands at midnight, you will be able to do what I say. I have spent nearly a hundred dollars in cable-tolls making sure of train-hours, distances, and difference in time, also the maximum number of hours it will take for your cable to reach him. Even then I am trusting to you somewhat more than I care to. For, after I surrender Kemp, what is there to prevent you from wiring your man to keep Dick a prisoner anyhow?"

"My word of honor, mademoiselle," he answered stiffly.

"Yet you will not take mine."

"I am taking your when I send this wire you speak of. But it shall be done. I will prove to you that I believe in your good faith. I will write and translate this message of yours into code, and you shall see from my code-book that instructions given are precisely as you wish them. And you shall send the cablegram yourself. The cable office is on interdicted ground; I may not cross the dead-line to send it. Even this cable I received was brought to me by a roundabout route that consumed hours."

He began scribbling. "Now you shall see," he said. "And, now"—when he had concluded to her satisfaction and she had handed back the little red code-book and received the written cablegram—"just how do you propose to give us possession of Kemp?"

Once again she unfolded a set of penciled memoranda; this time a rough sketch of both sides of that section of Bush Street that contained the Mayfair Chambers and the Kensington Apartments; also the rear of the latter and the adjoining alley.

She began with the latter.

"Bush Street being closed to you and your friends by the men who guard Kemp, a number of police and plainclothesmen from detective headquarters will patrol that particular block all the while he is there, you must enter the sub-cellar of the Kensington by this alley. As it is dangerous for you to approach even as near to Bush Street as the alley entrance, I have procured for you a duplicate of a key which opens a house on the adjoining street. This house was, I noted, for sale or rent, and I got the key from the agent, and had a duplicate made. So, just a little before midnight, you will come to this adjoining street, the one that runs parallel with Bush, and you and your men will leave your closed car and enter the empty house with this key. Go straight through the house and through the garden at the rear, which will bring you into the alley. Thus, you see, you are able to enter the back yards of Kensington Apartments without any one seeing you who is likely to be guarding the Bush Street front. For you will be in the open for only a moment or so as you cross the dark alleyway."

The man with the red tie gave her a look of unbridled admiration, shaking his head solemnly the while and muttering: "What could we not do with a woman like you, so far-sighted, or is it fore-sighted; or maybe it is both. That key to the empty house—that scrupulous care lest we be observed even at the alley entrance. That, indeed, is little short of genius."

"At all events," she went on, impatiently, "you see I have lived up to my bargain. Were you endangered and captured through fault of mine I would not be playing the game. But to continue. I will see to it that the rear yard gate is on the latch so that you may enter surreptitously; also the door to the basement. When you have descended, turn on the nearest electric light and you will find an arrow chalked up to show you your way. Keep close to the wall, and wherever you see an electric bulb, turn it on, and look for the arrow. They will lead you from the basement to the cellar and finally to the sub-cellar. When you reach the final arrow you will find a cross under it. This cross means that you are to secrete yourselves somewhere near by in order to be ready to fall upon Kemp when he passes through."

The man with the red tie let the ferrule of his stick drop heavily to the floor of the car.

"Passes through—from where?"

"From Mayfair Chambers. They are connected underground with the Kensington; both being under the same management, they are heated and lighted by the same furnace and dynamos. Both are in the Mayfair. Consequently the hot-air pipes and light cables run through a tunnel under the street that connects the two. Kemp will come through this tunnel—can you guess why?"

The man with the red tie surveyed her almost with awe.

"You have convinced him, I presume, that to pay you so late a call in any save this surreptitious way would be ruinous to your reputation, *n'c'est pas?* Mademoiselle,

you are marvelous, quite marvelous. So this was his reason for removing himself from the Presidio to the Mayfair; I can quite well understand now."

His smile was rather odious, but the girl ignored it. She thanked Heaven she had no worse price to pay, nothing more unendurable to endure. How would it have been had she really relegated to Kemp the right to pay her such a midnight call, instead of only pretending she had permitted it. Laurie had told her to say so (that was all she knew) and leave the rest to him. She was beginning to feel for this Laurie something stronger than any emotion ever awakened hitherto by any other man. He might be a Bolshevik for all she cared. He was, nevertheless, the most chivalrous, the most dependable and courageous creature she had ever known.

The look of growing admiration on the face of the man with the red tie was hateful to her. So she concluded abruptly:

"And now, if you please, I will go my way, and you yours. I will send this message, and will be ready for you at midnight. If there should be any delay on the part of Captain Kemp, he has promised to telephone me, and I will slip down to the sub-cellar and mark below the cross the additional time you will have to wait. But, in order to make sure before you start, you had better telephone me. That is to say, before you enter the empty house, phone me. I will say 'Yes' or 'No,' as the case may be. There is no reason for my saying anything but 'Yes' that I can see. But if, by some mischance, it should be 'No,' you can send your counter-cablegram. I have given you my word of honor, and I will keep it no matter what it costs me."

She had pulled the speaking-tube toward her and commanded the driver to stop. "There will be no need of our meeting again, none that I can see. But if you should find it otherwise, you know where to find me. So good-by."

She had taken the man with the red tie by surprise. He could only mutter "Good-by" and reach for a hand that was not there.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CAPTURE OF KEMP

"I KNEW it," Kemp had begun to moan. "I knew nothing but bad would come of leaving the Presidio. But you had to go your way, you had to go your way. And I—I—I—I—have to pay the penalty."

"Well, there's no time for argument now," Laurie returned, with a slightly crestfallen air. He reached into a traveling-bag, drew out a heavy Navy automatic, and saw to it that the first shell was in the firing-chamber before closing in the clip.

"Here," he said, "take this. You're likely to need it before the night's over."

As it was at that time lacking only a quarter-hour of midnight, with at least seven more hours of darkness before them, Kemp groaned dismally. At the touch of the gun against his hand he shrank.

"Take it away, take it away," he entreated. "I don't want it. I'd sooner let them take me at first than rouse them up and make them angry. They won't be likely to show me any mercy if I start shooting at them. Besides, I *can't* shoot. I've never had one of those things in my hands more than two or three times."

"Here, take it," commanded Laurie sternly. "If you haven't any regard for your own life, have some for mine, because I'm not going to let them take you without a struggle."

"But—but——"

"I got you into this. I'm going to get you out," Laurie continued. "So come along, come along. We haven't a moment to lose."

He opened the door into the adjoining room, where one of the I. P.'s who had been detailed as Kemp's guard sat in a sad state of dishevelment, his head bloody, his coat at the shoulder ripped across as if by a sharp knife. He was bathing his head and hands in the bowl of a stationary washstand, the water of which was deeply ensanguined.

"Tell Captain Kemp and myself how many of these Bolsheviks there were," commanded Laurie crisply.

The tall, stalwart I. P., looking somewhat

like a latter-day pirate with the red and yellow Turkish toweling tied about his head, which was done in lieu of drying the bleeding parts, made a hopeless gesture.

"There must have been two of them to every one of us. And the way they went at it was cunning, tricky. They came along as if none of them knew the others—in pairs, of course. And each pair stopped as it got near one of us, to light a cigarette, say, or as if they were going into some house, or to ask one of us a question, or—well, I don't know what. But it must have looked pretty natural and listened that way, or one of us would have given the alarm to the others, wouldn't they? I only know what mine said to me; he asked me how he was to get to Kearney and Sansome Streets, and I had just begun to explain when—zowie!—I got a beaning on the back of the head that sent me a-rolling bumpety-bump. I was up on my knees a second later, though, and give them the fight of their lives, knocking one of 'em clean out with my blackjack, which was swinging on my wrist, where it ought to be, thank God. Well, the other one was so busy getting his pal into the cab he didn't have any time for me. You see, the way I have it figured, they had to get this over during the time the lights were out.

"By the time they came up again there wasn't a soul in sight, you remember. You see, those taxis came rolling in and each pair must have hustled the I. P. or the detective he'd tackled into the cab and sent it off. But I was as cute as any of them. I figured they'd make for this hotel, and as I was nearest to it I got in here first. If I'd waited, I expect one of 'em would have jumped out from hiding to keep me from coming in here. But what puzzles me, how did they manage to shut off the lights on this street for that five minutes?"

"It only shows how powerful they are," Laurie answered, looking sternly at Kemp. "Now do you realize that these fellows are probably working their way up to this floor? They expect to find you here. Your only safety lies in being in the opposite direction. Come on. Kingsley here"—he motioned toward the I. P.—"will hold the door against them as long as he can to keep them thinking you are still here. Meanwhile——"

He handed Kemp a cap, shoved the Navy automatic into a shoulder-holster he had been strapping on while he spoke, caught Kemp, whirled him around and hurried him toward the servant's entrance of the little apartment.

The entrance opened on a steep and narrow stone stairway that ran almost parallel with the fire-escape. It was poorly lighted and Laurie produced his flash. But Kemp caught it from his hand.

"No, no; don't make a light," he urged in an extremity of terror. "They might be on these very stairs."

Laurie deliberately raised the flashlight and clicked it on. Its ray stabbed through the darkness, revealing a flight of stairs almost as steep and as sheer as the side of a precipice.

Descending, they reached the bottom and stood on the concrete floor of the basement. Kemp had pointed to a great concrete-covered iron girder, and as he spoke shrank back toward another. Laurie, however, with a great show of bravado, and flourishing the big Navy automatic which he drew from under his left arm-pit (for he had heard the stealthy footsteps, too), advanced toward the first girder.

"Come out of that!" he demanded, sternly.

There was a slow, reluctant scraping of feet. Kemp flattened himself against his girder, leaving as little of a target as possible. Then he relaxed, for the person who came into the circle of light thrown by Laurie's torch was no more dangerous in appearance than a slight girlish figure is apt to be.

It was Gerda Grahame, out of uniform, and wearing a boyish shirt-waist and tie, with a short skirt of the Grahame tartan in pattern; she looked little more than eighteen or so. Gone with the uniform was her attitude of self-dependence, her air of efficiency.

She fluttered toward Laurie, now that she was sure of his identity, with a pretty little helpless gesture.

"Oh, I can't do it!" she cried, her under-

lip quivering. Then she began to sob: "Not even for Dick, not even for Dick. I'm grateful to you and——"

"I've got Kemp in tow," he whispered, then he suddenly remembered that Kemp was listening. He held up his hand for silence. She stopped speaking, looking at him uncertainly. Laurie backed to Kemp, caught him by a shoulder and whirled him toward one of the many wooden doors, doors of rough, unpainted planking, *giving on rooms* used for various utilitarian purposes by the hotel servants. One or two were locked and the keys gone, but the third proved to be *that of a* sort of combination bath-room and lavatory.

Into this he thrust Kemp, whispering: "She's been on watch for us. Stay in here and keep quiet. They seem to have shaken her courage, too. I won't light the light in here, and don't you, and if there's any chance of them passing you up, you're in as good a place as there is. Ssh!"

And vouchsafing no further information, he shut and locked Kemp in and returned to the girl, whom he led some yards away from the place of their encounter before speaking.

"What do you mean, you can't do it?" he demanded harshly. "What do you mean? Don't you want to save your brother?"

"Yes, yes, but not at the cost of his honor. Not by betraying one of my own people!"

"An American?"

"My own blood, my own race, one of my country's Allies. No, I can't do it, not even for Dick. Why, he'd prefer to die a dozen times than be saved that way. Isn't he dying under a false name sooner than do something not one-tenth as injurious to his country and his country's Allies than I am proposing to do to save him? No, he'd never forgive me and I'd never forgive myself. I thought I could do it, but it isn't in the Grahame blood. And I can't, I can't, betray him."

"Why, you said yourself—" Laurie stammered, his manner of receiving this inchoate set of utterances a peculiar mixture of emotions—"you said yourself that one had only to compare the two men—Kemp and your brother—to agree that you were justified in sacrificing one to save the other—entirely apart from your sisterly sentiments, don't you remember?"

"Oh, but I was wrong, wrong," she answered wringing her hands despairingly. "And don't stand here talking. They must have reached the other end of the tunnel by now. They'll hear us! Go back, go back! I can't betray Kemp and I won't. It isn't which man is the most worth saving for himself. This Kemp has ferreted out secrets, knows things—all that—secrets and things that make him far more valuable to the Allies than Dick, poor old Dick! So he'll have too——"

She burst into noisy weeping which, remembering where she was, she instantly subdued.

Again Kemp's voice became harsh.

"How about betraying me?" he demanded. "How about keeping me from saving my brother? Have you thought of that? If this man Kemp isn't turned over to the Brotherhood now, he will manage to reach Washington—to condemn my brother to a living death. So whether you want to save yours or not, I must ask you to step out of the way and let me save mine. Do you—ah! so that's it?"

For Gerda Grahame had reached into the pocket of her plaid skirt and a small flat automatic, shaped like a cigarette-case with a spout, suddenly menaced him. The little ringless hand that held it wavered, but it was held more or less in line with his heart.

"I was afraid you would insist on this," she said, despairingly. "But I don't see what else I can do. Don't try to persuade me; I warn you it won't work. To betray this man Kemp would be to betray my uniform, too. I just can't do it, I tell you, not even for my brother."

"Well, I can," said Laurie briskly. "And you won't shoot, either. Oh, no, you won't," he added, and his eyes met hers in a hard, steely stare. While they held hers she had no chance to see what his hand was doing. And it was creeping slowly but surely in the direction of her hand. So that, before his eyes released hers, it had got near enough, and with a sudden dart it pinioned the wrist and flung the hand high.

Holding her thus, his other hand bending her left arm behind her back, he dragged her toward the room in which he had locked Kemp. Releasing her left arm temporarily, he turned the key and kicked open the door.

"Run, run!" he adjured Kemp, clapping his hand over the girl's mouth before she could advise him differently. "Quick now, quick, while I hold this girl. She's turned against us, betrayed us, tried to get us to go back where they're waiting for us. Yes, you may well wriggle, my dear young lady," he commented grimly, as Gerda, with a wiry strength he would never have known she possessed, tried by every means in her power to wrench herself free and give him the lie. "But you'll go in where the Captain was, and you'll stay there until we can send some one to arrest you. Run, Kemp, run, while I hold them off from behind. Right through the tunnel there until you reach the Kensington. Then straight upstairs to the—— But you know what to do. Hurry, hurry, hurry!"

Kemp needed no urging after Laurie's first admonition to make haste in getting away from there. His flying heels were almost out of sight before the last "hurry" reached his ears. Faster and faster he sped down the dark, semi-lighted corridor until he saw that he was approaching a patch of total darkness.

Then, to avoid pitching or stumbling over some unseen object, he halted. For a second or so he stood listening for sounds of pursuit. He heard none. But his ears, strained to catch the slightest sound, heard something else—something that chilled his blood.

It was the labored breathing of some one near by; some one who was attempting to conceal the fact that he was breathing at all.

Kemp stood stock-still, his breath coming and going by gasps. Then he realized that, in the darkness, this would betray his whereabouts, and he, too, tried to make his breathing inconspicuous. As the blood pounded in his ears, it seemed as though the labored breathing had become magnified; as though not one man, but a dozen, were crouching there in the darkness! It was all he could do to repress a shrill scream.

Then, silently, no word being spoken from the beginning of the capture until the end, he was gathered in. The hands of the concealed breathers reached for him on every side. As he side-stepped one way, it was to meet more clutching fingers. Another, and again hands came out of the darkness to meet him.

Then on all four sides they closed in on him. Hands held his wrists, other hands his ankles, still others pinioned his arms at the elbows, and a final pair held him from behind by the ears while a gag was deftly adjusted, tightened, and twisted into place. The same hands blindfolded him.

When the other hands left his person he was bound tightly with thin, strong, hempen cords. The only volition left him was that of walking, and he was hustled forward, an ominous feeling of steel in the small of his back, another in his midriff.

When he reached level ground, and was marched into the open and then under cover again, they were joined by several more—watchers, these seemed to be. Then up more stairs, down another hall, through another door into the open again.

He was at once thrust into some sort of a conveyance and driven off, his four guardsmen still with him.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ROUND-UP OF "THE REDS"

KEMP, who knew nothing of San Francisco, could have told you nothing about his whereabouts from the fact that the car which conveyed him was compelled to back and then go into low speed before attempting the hill which it climbed as the penultimate stage of its journey.

In one of those old-fashioned blocks spared by the fire stood an old-fashioned house in the midst of an old-fashioned garden. No one had noticed it particularly in that neighborhood of transients, which was

now given up to boarding and rooming houses, some of dubious repute.

Front, back, and sides, all windows were the same in the old house—all heavily shuttered, curtained and blinded.

"Now you're going in," some one had muttered in Kemp's ear, the man who had charge of his midriff, he thought; "and you want to talk as though you were a little drunk, do you comprehend? You have a cape-cloak thrown over your shoulders which hides your bound arms and hands. So you have only to stagger a little to give the illusion of being intoxicated in case any inquisitive person is looking on. I need not explain why you had better do so, need I?"

Nevertheless he did explain by letting Kemp feel the muzzle of his uncomfortaby hard weapon—this before they alighted. Consequently Kemp's legs proved themselves to be marvelously clever actors; their simulation of an inebriate's legs was artistically realistic.

Up a step or two, on broad, well-worn slabs of slate, and through a pair of doors, then his feet became noiseless as they met soft carpets or rugs, and he was marched into a room and seated.

"Your arms and wrists are going to be unfastened and the gag taken from your mouth," said a voice. "We do this because we are merciful. But if you make a move to cause us to regret this you will be instantly restrained in a manner much more painful. Moreover, you will probably pass out into the Great Unknown in this undignified and slavish fashion. Your eyes will remain bandaged for the time being, so that you will not be tempted to rise from your seat. Remain where you are and no harm will come to you."

He identified the voice as that of the leader of his body-guard and managed to mutter some sort of thanks when the welcome relief of unbandaged hands and feet brought back circulation to his stiffened limbs. Although at first it was a trifle painful, he soon managed to massage some semblance of life into them and to restore the normal circulation.

He now became a prey to his fears. The waiting became interminable, haunted as each minute was with dread of the immediate future. And yet, as he heard a clock strike one, he felt, paradoxically enough, perhaps, that the time was passing all too swiftly, since each minute brought him nearer to his death.

"Oh, my God!" he moaned; "oh, my God!"

But even to moan aloud was forbidden. He must be as silent as he was immobile. And so, unable to do more, he relapsed into quiet sobbing, the sobbing of some heart-broken woman rather than any kind of man. The tears rolled down his cheeks without any effort on his part to check them. Indeed, he found some relief in being able to give way to some emotion not forbidden.

But now, at last, the door opened. Kemp heard the sound of many feet outside, the murmur of many voices all speaking some foreign tongue.

"Here, gentlemen," said some one whose voice Gerda would have recognized as that of the man with the red tie—a voice that, when raised, caused the chattering of the others to cease—"here is the surprise you were promised when you were sent for. Here is the man who has achieved a reputation among American secret agents second to none, now that their great Robert Lane Williams is dead. Within a few months, while we and others were fatuously believing that we held in check, and had accounted for, the movements of every secret agent operating against us, this man became active, and remained so—without our knowledge, fools that we were!—for better than two years."

A groan of recognition ran through the crowd that seemed assembled at the doorway. Several spoke sibilantly; more muttered. Kemp heard and tried to speak. But both mouth and tongue had gone as dry as desert sand. He could only choke, inarticulately.

"Yes, gentlemen, for two years and more this man worked among us. Seemingly he was one of us. So well did he play his part, so masterly was his portrayal of a patriotic Brother, that he achieved the high place of a Master, in full charge of the Department

of Omsk. Mind you, there are but five Masterships beyond the place that he won. And having won it, what did he proceed to do?"

The groans and hisses and other forms of disapproval became so numerous and so long-drawn that Kemp would have vented his long-repressed feelings in a shriek had he not lost all control of his muscular activity. His jaw dropped, his mouth hung open like that of some workhouse idiot's.

"And when his day of reckoning finally came, the speaker went on, "so little did we suspect him that he was able to cross Siberia and reach Vladivostock before positive identification became possible. Then, when it seemed we had him in our grasp, he makes his own escape possible by handing over to our enemies every single soul of the Vladivostock Brotherhood. He made possible, also, the seizing of that city by those same traitors before the Brotherhood was able to recover from the shock. And without leaders the cause was lost."

The hisses and the groans had become positively frightful, so that Kemp's pitiful scream, "I didn't; it wasn't me," was lost in the general uproar.

The speaker paused in his peroration, pointing a finger that trembled in its triumph:

"His evil deeds are at an end, this traitor's. He will betray no more secrets and no more Brothers!" he roared. "Look at him as he sits there, both those who knew him when he was one of us—or pretended to be—and those who have never seen him before, but would do well to look, for they will then know what Judas's face might have been. For there—turn on the light, Vladimir—there, friends and Brothers, sits our worst enemy, Oliver Kemp, so-called, or, as he was known to us, Nicolai Estrine, a Captain in this Capitalistic Country's Army—Captain Oliver Kemp, U. S. A."

The name was greeted with mocking jeers and exclamations of supreme satisfaction. Kemp became aware that the room had been suddenly flooded with illumination from the fact that his bandage became semiopaque. He was roughly jostled to his feet.

A hand reached for his face. Kemp shrank back with a sudden scream. It was answered by a harsh, fierce exclamation, which became one of dismay as the bandage was snatched from his eyes—a skeptical cry from one of the gang.

"Kemp? This—Kemp! This—this camel! *Fond du bain!*—your jest is in poor taste, *Maitre.* I, for one, relish no such jokes on serious subjects. This creature? Why, Kemp—the man of the iron nerve, the steel eye, the heart that knows no fear—Kemp would not spit upon this fellow."

As he drove each sentence home Kemp saw the look of dismay turn to rage as each man eyed 'the man with the red tie' and whom they called 'The Master'.

He, on his part, torn by conflicting emotions, beckoned to a man who stood just outside the door.

"Vladimir!"

"Aye, Maitre." The man stepped forward and, at the regulation number of feet distance, saluted in military fashion.

"When we took this man prisoner, did I not flash the light into his face for a space sufficiently long enough for you to identify him—tonight, I mean, when we sprang upon him and pinioned him?"

"Aye, Maitre. He was the man who left the *Siberia* with the other uniformed ones. I was in an upper story near by with field-glasses."

"And you identify this man as that person in uniform?"

"Aye, Maitre. If the messieurs will pardon——"

He stepped forward again, his hand flashed toward Kemp's face. Again Kemp shrank, but not in time to avoid the fingers which clumsily stripped away both sections of his false mustache, then the imperial.

"Perhaps the reason those who knew him in Mother Russia have now failed to remember him is because of this false hair upon his face—and head!" Vladimir jerked away the wig and tossed it on the table with the remainder of the disguise. "I saw, when you flashed your light, that all this was false. Nevertheless, it was thus he appeared when he wore the uniform and left the *Siberia.* There can be no mistake."

"There can be a mistake" thundered the

man who had first spoken, one whose blue-black cheeks betokened that the beard he had worn until recently had been anything but a false one. "I tell you I know this man Kemp. I, too, belonged to the Brotherhood of Omsk. I have sat beside him as many times, Maitre, as I have sat beside you. I know his every feature, his every expression, his every trick of speech and movement. And I tell you this wretched coward is *not* he!"

Taking advantage of the consternation into which this statement threw the roomful of men, Kemp began to babble excitedly:

"It is true; what he says is true. I am not the man you want. I would have told you before had you given me a chance. But you gagged and blindfolded and bound me and told me not to speak or to move, and what could I do? Spare my life and I will tell you how you may get the other man, the real man. I will——"

"Are you, or are you not, Oliver Kemp, Captain, U. S. A.?"

"Yes, yes, I am. But not—— Oh, if you will only let me explain. *It is the other man who is not Kemp.* Don't you understand? He used my name and rank just as he used his disguises. Listen to me, won't you?"

"Speak quickly. This smacks of treachery, the sort of treachery associated with Kemp's name. Who and what are you, and if you are not Kemp, who do you say——"

"Only listen," begged the wretched man. "I will tell you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God. There, that's an oath I've sworn. I wouldn't go back on that. Now listen; here is the truth. I am a coward, I confess it."

"This is news from nowhere," sneered the big fellow who had known "Kemp." "Don't waste our time with tautologies."

"When the war was on, I did not volunteer. When the draft came my mother used her influence and her money to keep me from being drafted. And she succeeded. But what the government could not do a girl did. I fell in love. She would have nothing to do with me, because she said I was a slacker, and that all the town despised me for it. She said she would not have anything to do with me, then or ever afterwards, if I did not enlist. Well, I was in love, gentlemen, and I did it.

"But I, too, was betrayed. My first betrayal was by General Luders, who got me my commission. He deliberately got me appointed to the Intelligence Department of the Siberian Expeditionary Force.

"My mother and I tried every expedient to get me released. But to no avail. I had to go.

"It was about this time that a man I had known as a boy in my home town, Merino, came back there. When he met me he told me he envied me my commission in the army and the right to wear the uniform. He said he had tried time and time again to enlist, but had always been rejected because of a mitral murmur, or something of the sort. It was then that I said I wished I had something like it so I could get out of going to Siberia. One word led to another and finally he made me the proposal that has landed me where I am today."

He paused to take breath. In that crowded room, the contempt they felt for the coward had faded from their faces, giving place to a strained expectancy, a premonition of evil.

"He pointed out to me," Kemp continued, "that our general descriptions were about the same. That all we need do was to substitute his photograph for mine on my 'orders' and on the duplicate to be sent to Washington. Then we could leave town and meet in San Francisco, where we would exchange clothes, he taking my uniforms, orders, and soforth, and reporting to the Chief Intelligence Officer. I must have been mad to consent to such a proposal. But, never mind about that now—I did.

"So, with him off to Siberia, I had to do the best I could with hiding my head where I wouldn't be seen."

"If you did this, as you say—and which seems sufficiently incredible—how comes it that you, and not your friend, was the one to be welcomed on the *Siberia* this morning?"

"That," explained Kemp, his voice faltering but eager, "was because, when I read of

'Captain Kemp' coming home, the same newspaper article told how, among the party to welcome him, would be 'General Luders', the very man who had procured my appointment. Then I was in despair. If the truth came out, all I had endured during the past two years would be for nothing. So I sent a wireless to the man bearing my name, one in the private code we had agreed upon before he left."

"You sent a cable in code?" prompted Le Maitre, coldly.

"Yes, and he answered with two. One in the same code telling me to come aboard on the cutter bringing the Customs folk and the newspaper-men and to call myself 'A. Laurie'. The other cablegram was sent to the head of the Secret Service in San Francisco, requesting that a pass for 'Andrew Laurie' was to be issued to a gentleman of that name who would call for it—which his cable directed me to do. It also asked the Secret Service man not to divulge this request to any one.

"I waited until the last day before the *Siberia* was expected before leaving my refuge in the San Joaquin Valley," faltered Kemp, as he began to realize that what he saw written so plainly on the faces all about him was nothing short of rank unbelief.

"Go on!" growled the leader.

Kemp told them of how he had come aboard in the cutter, how he had hastily repaired to the false "Kemp's" cabin, where he had changed places with the other man, and put on the uniform while the spy donned his clothes; how the other, as "Andrew Laurie," had left the stateroom, met the newspaper man who had some suspicions of some kind, had returned to affix the false hair to his, Kemp's, face so that he would not be recognized as the cutter's passenger; and how, finally, after he had met General Luders and been congratulated by him, obviating all chances of that old gentleman discovering the deception the two had practised, "Laurie" had had a conversation with Colonel Courtright, which had resulted in his quarters being changed from the Presidio to Mayfair Chambers.

"Well," Le Maitre yelled, as Kemp faltered out the preceding, "what of the young lady, Miss Grahame? Wasn't she the cause of your removing to that address directly across the street from where you took quarters? Weren't you on your way to meet her, clandestinely, when we fell upon you? Answer, man!"

"That's one bait my false friend used to get me into the cellar." Kempt was all a-tremble. "I—I—never saw her but twice, once when she was introduced to me on the ship, the other time when she met us, Laurie and I, a few minutes before you—er—'fell on me.' When she said, 'I can't do it,' Laurie got me out of the way while he talked and argued with her. I didn't hear what they said, but he was struggling with her when he called to me to 'Run, run!' And I did run—right into your hands."

Le Maitre stood stock-still, staring at him. It was impossible not to believe this terror-stricken coward; every word carried conviction. The Master's troubled gaze met the apprehensive one of the man who had known Kemp in Europe.

"Something is most decidedly wrong here," the latter stammered, his eyes roving the crowded room. "There is not so much untruth here as we began by believing. That man is not actor enough to carry this off as an untruth. Besides, now that we know he is not Kemp, he——"

A frightened gleam came into the Master's eyes.

"What was the name of the man with whom you exchanged places?" he demanded. "Speak, man, quick! What was his name?"

"Why his name was really Bob Williams."

A terrible sound escaped from between Le Maitre's teeth, a sound like nothing so much as a suppressed yell from a soul in agony.

"'Robert Lane Williams!' 'Robert Lane Williams!'" echoed one after another of the assembled sixteen conspirators. Their tones were a peculiar mixture of awe, excitement, and apprehension.

"'Robert Lane Williams!'" repeated Le Maitre, his voice dull and depressed when finally he found it again. He continued in Slavic, to avoid Kemp's understanding;

"Well, all is over, gentlemen. There but remains to bury the corpse. I have been 'bamboozled'—as these Yankees say—from beginning to end. There is only one consolation, both to us and our Brothers overseas. It was not done by the amateur we thought this 'Kemp' to be, but by America's most expert military spy. There remains but one question to settle. Now that we know we are undone——"

"How shall we know that?" demanded a younger member excitedly. "Let us hasten away from here, and——"

"You fool!" broke in he of the hirsute hands. "Be still."

Le Maitre looked pityingly at the first speaker: "Do you imagine that we would be permitted to take a single step beyond our first once we open the street-door—or the rear one? Do you not realize that 'Kemp,' or Williams, has used our eagerness to secure him as a bait to bring the Brotherhood together? Do you imagine that, having done so, he will permit us to scatter again? No! My brother from Omsk is in agreement?"

The hairy-handed man who knew "Kemp" nodded.

"We have but to consider two alternatives. First, shall we put up an armed resistance, which in the end will avail us nothing, or shall we throw ourselves upon this Williams's mercy?"

"Put it to the vote!" broke in the man from Omsk. "All in favor of a peaceful parley vote say 'Aye.'"

The chorus of "Ayes" was almost unanimous. "Good" was the comment of the leader. "Now, remain where you are and leave the rest to me."

He left the room and they heard him go down the hall and throw open the front door. He stood there for a second or so, silent, his shadow, elongated in the lighted patch of garden, directly in line with the door. Then he waved his handkerchief.

"Lane Williams!" he called, in his odd foreign way, "I desire a parley under the white flag."

"Reach into the other pocket, then," came in a quizzical voice from out of the shadows. "The flag you are using now is too much like your real sentiments to appeal very much to any one who intends to parley, Alexieff."

"Bokaime, is it thou?" Le Maitre demanded, his amazement at the sound of the voice driving all other thoughts from his mind. "Waldemar Bokaime, what do you do here?"

"Change your flag and I will tell you," came the answer, and Le Maitre, looking at the handkerchief he waved, perceived it was his red silk bandanna. He replaced it hastily and drew from his other hip pocket the one he had intended to use.

"Good!" proclaimed the voice, and the speaker stepped into the light.

"Waldemar Bokaime!" was the cry of Le Maitre.

"Also known, for the past few days, as 'Andrew Laurie,'" agreed the same quizzical voice. "I have not seen you, Alexieff, since the days of Kerensky."

"When you, too, were one of us," muttered Alexieff, weakly. "Brothers, you see what chance we would have had against this man. Waldemar, we have heard enough of the truth to realize that you have cornered us. I have promised my friends, on your behalf, and on your reputation as a generous foe—meaning you as Monsieur Lane Williams—that they shall have generous terms if they surrender without bloodshed. Remember, all are armed, all are desperate."

"They shall have them," responded Laurie, *alias* Kemp, *alias* Williams. "All we want here in America is that you should cease to honor us with your company. Unless any one of you should be found to be guilty of recorded acts of violence, you shall go, every man Jack of you, on the deporting steamer *Archangel* that sails from New York on the 15th. This is my promise. Are those terms generous enough?"

The others of the Brotherhood had crowded into the hall and now stood a sullen mass of shadows at the rear.

"Gentleman," commanded Alexieff, "you see I was not wrong. Will you be so good as to come forward, delivering your arms to me as you pass, that I may hand them to Monsieur Lane Williams? Place them within that old traveling-bag for convenience.

Let no one fail to surrender all weapons of offense."

As they came into the light, one by one, Alexieff turned again to the spy with many names:

"I can only show my gratitude, sir, by warning you against this little serpent whose name you honored by using." And he pushed Kemp forward so roughly that he stumbled and would have fallen had not the secret agent caught him. "He betrayed you when we promised to spare his life. Pfugh! —what vermin!"

"Ah, well," said Williams-Kemp-Laurie. "We cannot expect much of a decoy duck, can we?

A man in uniform stepped out of the shadows.

"See Captain Kemp home," he commanded. "As for the rest of you, "he added to his detectives, "forward! Each one of you escort one of these gentlemen to the Presidio and report to Colonel Courtright or his adjutant. If your men, Alexieff, will promise to go in peace, giving their paroles to attempt no escape, they may ride like gentlemen, unhandcuffed, to their destination. They give it? Good! Another promise I require from you, Alexieff, is that you will attempt to send no messages. The girl acted in good faith, and she should not be punished. As I am being generous with you, be generous with her, you understand?"

"It makes little difference whether I am or not—now," growled Alexieff in answer. "The time is past when a cablegram could reach the train before the train reaches Shan-hai-Kuan. At the present moment Lieut. Colonel Grahame is as free as you are."

Oliver Kemp was hustled out of San Francisco early the following morning, leaving his resignation in the hands of his new commanding officer, Colonel Courtright, *en route* for Merino, where he has remained every since.

And Marmaduke, the reporter, never learned any more about the great international spy matter.

It took a long time to explain matters to Gerda next morning, and when he had concluded the late Mr. Laurie could not be sure whether her preponderating emotion was one of relief or reproach.

"Then you never had a brother in captivity at all?" she asked.

"No, my dear."

"Perhaps you never even had a brother?"

"Not even that, my dear."

"But suppose you had had? You wouldn't have done what I did for him, would you? You despise me for even thinking of being a traitor, don't you?"

"No, my dear."

"Which question is that an answer to? Does that mean you *wouldn't* have done what I did?"

"No my dear."

"And what does that mean? And why do you keep calling me 'my dear'?"

"Because you are a 'dear' for being so generous and courageous as to risk everything to save your brother. Because you are a 'dear,' after risking so much for one you truly loved, to let your sense of duty rule you at the last moment, and to take even greater chances to prevent the very thing happening that would make your brother a free man—the thing you desired more than anything else on earth. And finally, being such a dear, I've called you 'my dear' in the hope that you won't object. You've already resigned your commission; you're no longer 'Captain,' but 'Miss' Grahame. Would you mind very much now if I asked you to resign the 'Miss'?"

His arms went about her as he spoke: "We've both had a pretty strenuous time alone. Don't you think we're both entitled to an easy one for a while—just you and I, somewhere here in California, far from wars and rumors of wars, and 'Reds'—or 'Whites' or 'Blues,' for that matter? Do you think you'd object—very much?"

"Does this look like I would?" she gasped, once she managed to get her breath. "Does this look like I'd object—very much?" and she nestled closer to him, sure now that she loved him.

(*The End.*)

How Prisoners Escape

THERE never has been so good a foundation as people suppose for the stories that abound in romance about prisoners tunneling through stone walls and under the ground with no tools but a dull case-knife or something of the kind. Of course such things have happened, but they are as much out of date as the other incidents of the Monte Cristo school of novels. The boring through or under the walls of a well-built modern prison would be about as possible as to go gold-mining successfully in a quartz ledge with no tools but a steel pen. The only practical method now is to get past the guards, either by an artifice of bribery or by a bold dash. This is occasionally done, even now, when prison discipline has been carried to that point where it is almost impossible to outwit the guards.

It is exceedingly difficult for prisoners to establish communication with outside confederates, though there may be other convicts whose terms are just expiring, in which case, of course, it is comparatively easy.

To smuggle clothing into a prison, however, is almost an impossibility without the connivance of some keeper, guard or citizen, for everything that is brought inside the place is examined carefully by one or more of the keepers, and the convicts are not allowed to see it until it is examined. Then, of course, anything like proper watchfulness at the entrance of a prison would block such a plan.

One case of this kind, however, was plotted carefully and carried out successfully. It caused a great hue and cry at the time, and no similar case has been known since.

An obvious expedient, which seldom succeeds for a number of reasons that are equally obvious, is the bribing of a keeper. It was tried successfully, however, in 1873, by "Jim" Brady, alias "Albany Jim," and by "Billy Miller." Brady was a bank burglar who had returned from prison, and Miller was, at the time mentioned, serving a ten years' sentence as a hotel thief. They offered one of the prison guards a one-thousand-dollar bill to aid them in escaping, and he took the bribe. They got away successfully and were out for a considerable time before they were rearrested, which both were eventually in New York City. Brady was caught by a detective from headquarters, but he would not surrender when called on to do so and jumped through a window in the effort to escape again. The detective shot him as he jumped, and then captured him without difficulty. The keeper's complicity with the escape had already been discovered, and he was tried and convicted of the offense and sentenced to five years in the State prison himself.

One of the famous escapes from Sing Sing was that of May 14th, 1875, when four men working near the cut in the prison grounds through which the railroad passes dropped from above on a locomotive. They were armed with dummy pistols, which they had made of wood, and with these they threatened the engineer and fireman, frightening them so badly that they jumped off. One of the four understood engines well enough to start this one up, and after uncoupling it from the train ran two miles at full speed. Then they jumped off and scattered through the country. They were all caught and returned to prison. One was Peter McKenna, a "life man," and another was William, alias "Shang" Hawley, who was serving a five years sentence for burglary. The other two were Steve Boyle, a "butcher cart thief," and Charley Woods, a burglar.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
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65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
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99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
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138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.

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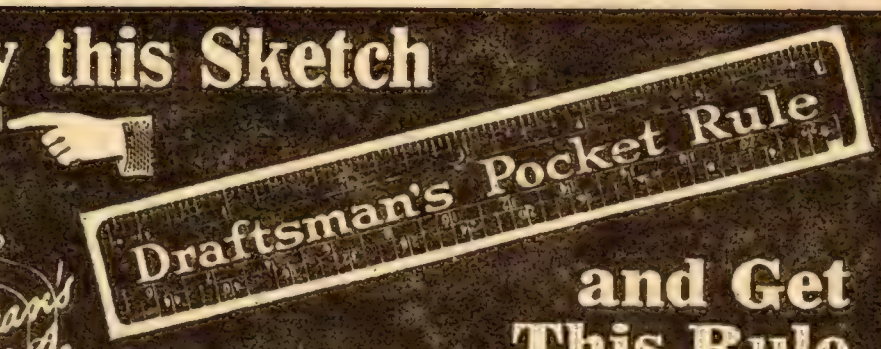

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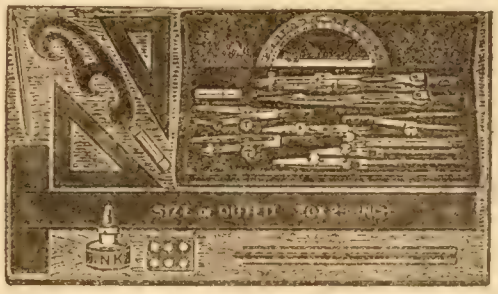

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